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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY DR. GREGORY;

AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER,

BY JOHN FOSTER.

66850

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D. F.R.A.S.

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

VOL. III.

TRACTS POLITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS.

SECOND EDITION.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In this Volume, Mr. Hall's Political Tracts are arranged in the order of their publication. To them succeeds various Tracts, which, though not strictly political, bear an obvious relation to the subjects of politics and political economy; employing the latter term, not in its restricted sense, which regards merely the *wealth* of nations, but in the more extended acceptation, which embraces the momentous topics of general security, freedom, comfort, and happiness. Some of these pieces, though very extensively circulated to promote the purposes for which they were respectively written, were never issued by sale, and it is now exceedingly difficult to procure a single copy of them. Others, which were regularly published, have been long out of print.

The origin of the Fragments on Village Preaching, and general Toleration, I have briefly described in a prefatory note, p. 329.

The summary of the arguments on Christian Communion could not be included in the second volume without unduly augmenting its bulk; it is, therefore, inserted in this.

The Miscellaneous Pieces which terminate the volume, have, it is true, no necessary connexion with the Tracts which precede them; but as they are equally unconnected with any of the subjects treated in the fourth volume, they are here introduced, solely for the purpose of preserving a

tolerable uniformity in size throughout the series. They appeared originally in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, and have not since been *published* with their author's permission. They serve, however, to shew with what taste and elegance he could, in early life, indulge in the lighter species of composition; and what eminence he might have attained in that department of literature, had not his inclinations as well as his profession led him to devote his rich endowments to infinitely higher purposes.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

August 1, 1831.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

TRACTS, POLITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS.

Page

CHRISTIANITY CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM . 1

Preface 3

Note by the Editor 4

SECTION I.

On the Duty of common Christians in Relation to Civil Polity 8

SECTION II.

On the Duty of Ministers in respect to Civil Polity . 19

SECTION III.

On the Pretences Mr. ——— advances in favour of his Principles 33

SECTION IV.

On the Test Act 47

AN APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS . . . 61

Advertisement to the Third Edition 63

Original Preface 68

Advertisement to the New Edition 80

SECTION I.

On the Right of Public Discussion 83

SECTION II.

On Associations 94

SECTION III.

On a Reform of Parliament 104

SECTION IV.

On Theories and the Rights of Man 121

SECTION V.

On Dissenters 138

SECTION VI.

On the Causes of the Present Discontents 155

Page
Review of the Apology for the Freedom of the Press . . 175
Mr. Hall's Reply 183
Note by the Editor 201

On the Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company 203

An Appeal to the Public, on the Subject of the Frame-work Knitters' Fund 231
Advertisement 233

A Reply to the Principal Objections advanced by Cobbett and Others against the Frame-work Knitters' Friendly Relief Society 255

An Address on the State of Slavery in the West India Islands 299

Fragments 327
Note by the Editor 329
Defence of Village Preaching 333
The Impolicy of Intolerance 357
On Toleration 360
On the Right of Worship 384

A Short Statement of the Reasons for Christian in opposition to Party Communion 407
Preface 409

Miscellaneous Pieces 457
Character of Cleander 459
A Reverie 464
Essay on Poetry and Philosophy 480

CHRISTIANITY CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM:

BEING

AN ANSWER

TO

A SERMON,

LATELY PUBLISHED, BY THE REV. ——.

[PUBLISHED IN 1791.]

PREFACE.

It may be proper just to remark, that the animadversions I have made on Mr. ———'s Sermon did not arise from my conviction of there being any thing even of plausibility in his reasonings, but from an apprehension, that certain accidental and occasional prejudices might give some degree of weight to one of the weakest defences of a bad cause that was ever undertaken. I have taken up more time in shewing that there is no *proper connexion* between the unitarian doctrine and the principles of liberty than the subject may seem to require; but this will not be thought superfluous by those who recollect that that idea seems to be the great hinge of Mr. ———'s discourse, and that it appears amongst the orthodox part of the dissenters to have been productive already of unhappy effects. I shall only add, that these remarks would have appeared much sooner but for severe indisposition, and that I was induced to write them chiefly from a persuasion that they might perhaps, in the present instance, have somewhat of additional weight as coming from one who is *not* an unitarian.

CAMBRIDGE,
Sept. 17, 1791.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

"CHRISTIANITY consistent with a Love of Freedom," was written when Mr. Hall was twenty-seven years of age: and he never would consent to its re-publication. He continued to think the main principles correct and important; but he regarded the tone of animadversion as severe, sarcastic, and unbecoming. Three or four editions have, however, been printed surreptitiously; and one of them, which now lies before me, is so complete an imitation of the original edition of 1791, as usually to escape detection. It is printed with an old-fashioned type, and on dingy coloured paper, to suit its assumed age. But on comparing it closely with the genuine edition, I find that three of the capital letters, on different pages, have too modern and broad a face; and, on holding up the paper on which it is printed to a strong light, I perceive a water-mark which gives the date 1818 to the *paper* of a pamphlet which purports to be *printed* in 1791! If any of even the lowest class of booksellers will have recourse to such contemptible forgeries as this, an author is evidently no longer master of his intellectual property, nor can he when he pleases withdraw it from the public eye.

This, though one of the earliest productions laid by Mr. Hall before the public, is, with the exception already adverted to, by no means calculated to deteriorate his reputation. It contains some powerful reasoning as well as some splendid passages, and the concluding four or five pages exhibit a fine specimen of that union of severe taste, and lofty genius, and noble sentiment, which is evinced, I think, more frequently in his compositions than in those of any other modern author.

I have no fear of incurring blame for having cancelled throughout the name of the individual against whom Mr. Hall's strictures were levelled. Venerable for his age, and esteemed for his piety, who would now voluntarily cause him, or those who love him, a pang?

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
June 1, 1831.

CHRISTIANITY

CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM, &c.

THIS is a period distinguished for extraordinary occurrences, whether we contemplate the world under its larger divisions, or in respect to those smaller communities and parties, into which it is broken and divided. We have lately witnessed, with astonishment and regret, the attempts of a celebrated orator to overthrow the principles of freedom, which he had rendered himself illustrious by defending; as well as to cover with reproach the characters of those by whom, in the earlier part of life, he was most caressed and distinguished. The success of these efforts is pretty generally known, and is such as it might have been expected would have been sufficient to deter from similar attempts. But we now behold a dissenting minister coming forth to the public under the character of a flatterer of power, and an *accuser of his brethren.* If the splendid eloquence that adorns every part of Mr. BURKE'S

celebrated book cannot shelter the author from confutation, and his system from contempt, Mr. ———, with talents far inferior, has but little to expect in the same cause. It is not easy to conceive the motives which could impel him to publish his sermon. From his own account it should seem he was anxious to disabuse the legislature, and to convince them there are many amongst the dissenters who highly disapprove the sentiments and conduct of the more patriotic part of their brethren. How far he may be qualified from his talents or connexions, as a mouth, to declare the sentiments of any considerable portion of the dissenters, I shall not pretend to decide, but shall candidly confess, there are not wanting amongst us persons who are ready upon all occasions to oppose those principles on which the very existence of our dissent is founded. Every party will have its apostates of this kind; it is our consolation, however, that their numbers are comparatively small, that they are generally considered as our reproach, and that their conduct is in a great measure the effect of necessity, as they consist almost entirely of persons who can only make themselves heard by confusion and discord. If our author wishes to persuade the legislature the friends of arbitrary power are conspicuous for their number or their rank in the dissenting interest, he has most effectually defeated his own intentions, as scarce any thing could give them a meaner opinion of that party,

in both these respects, than this publication of its champion. The sermon he has obtruded upon the public is filled with paradoxes of so singular a complexion, and so feebly supported, that I find it difficult to lay hold of any thing in the form of argument, with sufficient steadiness for the purpose of discussion.

I shall endeavour, however, with as much distinctness as I am able, to select the fundamental principles on which the discourse rests, and shall attempt, as I proceed, to demonstrate their falsehood and danger.

Our author's favourite maxim is the inconsistency of the christian profession with political science, and the certain injury its spirit and temper must sustain from every kind of interference with the affairs of government. Political subjects he considers as falling within the *peculiar* province of the irreligious; ministers, in particular, he maintains, should ever observe, amidst the concussions of party, an entire neutrality; or if at any time they depart from their natural line of conduct, it should only be in defence of the measures of government, in allaying dissensions, and in convincing the people they are incompetent judges of their rights. These are the servile maxims that run through the whole of this extraordinary discourse; and, that I may give a kind of method to the following observations upon them, I shall shew in the first place the relation christianity bears to civil government, and its consistency with

political discussion, as conducted either by ordinary christians or ministers; in the next place, I shall examine some of the pretences on which the author founds his principles.

Section I.

On the Duty of common Christians in Relation to Civil Polity.

The momentous errors Mr. ——— has committed, appear to me to have arisen from an inattention to the proper design of christianity, and the place and station it was intended to occupy. On this subject I beg the reader's attention to the following remarks:—

1st. Christianity was subsequent to the existence and creation of man. It is an institution intended to improve and ennoble our nature, not by subverting its constitution, or its powers, but by giving us a more enlarged view of the designs of Providence, and opening a prospect into eternity. As the existence of man is not to be *dated* from the publication of christianity, so neither is that order of things that flows from his relation to the present world, altered or impaired by that divine system of religion. Man, under the christian dispensation, is not a new structure erected on the ruin of the former; he may rather be compared to an ancient fabric, restored, when it had fallen into decay, and beautified afresh by the hand of its original founder.

Since christianity has made its appearance in the world, he has continued the same kind of being he was before, fills the same scale in the order of existence, and is distinguished by the same propensities and powers.

In short, christianity is not a reorganization of the principles of man, but an institution for his improvement. Hence it follows, that whatever rights are founded on the constitution of human nature, cannot be diminished or impaired by the introduction of revealed religion, which occupies itself entirely on the interests of a future world, and takes no share in the concerns of the present in any other light than as it is a state of preparation and trial. Christianity is a discovery of a future life, and acquaints us with the means by which its happiness may be secured; civil government is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill, designed to ensure freedom and tranquillity during our continuance on this temporary stage of existence. Between institutions so different in their nature and their object, it is plain no real opposition can subsist; and if ever they are represented in this light, or held inconsistent with each other, it must proceed from an ignorance of their respective genius and functions. Our relation to this world demands the existence of civil government; our relation to a future renders us dependent on the aid of the christian institution; so that in reality there is no kind of contrariety between

them, but each may continue without interference in its full operation. Mr. ———, however, in support of his absurd and pernicious tenets, always takes care to place civil government and christianity in opposition, whilst he represents the former as carrying in it somewhat antichristian and profane. Thus he informs us, *that civil government is a stage erected on which man acts out his character, and shews great depravity of heart.* All interference in political parties, he styles *an alliance with the world, a neglecting to maintain our separation, and to stand upon our own hallowed ground. There is one way,* says he, by which he means to insinuate there is only one, *in which you may all interfere in the government of your country, and that is by prayer to God, by whom kings reign.* These passages imply that the principles of civil polity and religion must be at perpetual variance, as without this supposition, unsupported as it is in fact, they can have no force or meaning.

2d. Mr. ——— misleads his reader by not distinguishing the innocent entertainments or social duties of our nature from those acts of piety which fall within the *immediate province* of christianity.

The employments of our particular calling, the social ties and endearments of life, the improvement of the mind by liberal inquiry, and the cultivation of science and of art, form, it is true, no part of the christian system, for they flourished before it was known; but they are intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of the human race.

A christian should act ever consistent with his profession, but he need not always be attending to the peculiar duties of it. The profession of religion does not oblige us to relinquish any undertaking on account of its being *worldly*, for we must then go out of the world; it is sufficient, that every thing in which we engage, is of such a nature, as will not violate the principles of virtue, or occupy so much of our time or attention, as may interfere with more sacred and important duties.

Mr. ——— observes, *Jesus Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in temporal affairs, especially in the concerns of the then existing government;* and hence he draws a precedent to regulate the conduct of his followers. That our Saviour did not intermeddle with the policy of nations, I am as willing as our author to admit; for the improvement of this, any more than any other science which might be extremely short and defective, formed no part of his mission, and was besides rendered quite unnecessary, by that energy of mind which, prompted by curiosity, by our passions and our wants, will ever be abundantly sufficient to perpetuate and refine every civil or human institution. He never intended that his followers, on becoming christians, should forget they were men, or consider themselves as idle or uninterested spectators on the great theatre of life. The author's selection of proofs is almost always unhappy, but in no instance more than the present,

when he attempts to establish his doctrine of the unlawfulness of a christian interfering in the administration of government on our Saviour's silence respecting it, a circumstance of itself sufficient to support a quite contrary conclusion; for if it had been his intention to discountenance the study of political subjects, he would have furnished us, without doubt, with some general regulations, some stated form of policy, which should for ever preclude the necessity of such discussion; or, if that were impracticable, have let us into the great secret of living without government; or, lastly, have supplied its place, by a theocracy similar to that of the Jews. Nothing of this has he accomplished, and we may therefore rest assured, the political affairs of nations are suffered to remain in their ancient channels, and to be conducted as occasions may arise, by christians or by others, without distinction.

3d. The principles of freedom ought, in a more peculiar manner, to be cherished by christians, because they alone can secure that liberty of conscience, and freedom of inquiry, which is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of their profession. A full toleration of religious opinions, and the protection of all parties in their respective modes of worship, are the natural operations of a free government; and every thing that tends to check or restrain them, materially affects the interests of religion. Aware of the force of religious belief over the mind of man, of the generous

independence it inspires, and of the eagerness with which it is cherished and maintained, it is towards this quarter the arm of despotism first directs its attacks, while through every period, the imaginary right of ruling the conscience has been the earliest assumed, and the latest relinquished. Under this conviction, an enlightened christian, when he turns his attention to political occurrences, will rejoice in beholding every advance towards freedom in the government of nations, as it forms not only a barrier to the encroachments of tyranny, but a security to the diffusion and establishment of truth. A considerable portion of personal freedom may be enjoyed, it is true, under a despotic government, or, in other words, a great part of human actions may be left uncontrolled; but with this an enlightened mind will never rest satisfied, because it is at best but an indulgence flowing from motives of policy, or the lenity of the prince, which may be at any time withdrawn by the hand that bestowed it. Upon the same principles, religious toleration may have an accidental and precarious existence, in states whose policy is the most arbitrary; but, in such a situation, it seldom lasts long, and can never rest upon a secure and permanent basis, disappearing for the most part along with those temporary views of interest or policy, on which it was founded. The history of every age will attest the truth of this observation.

Mr. ———, in order to prepare us to digest

his principles, tells us in the first page of his discourse, *that the gospel dispensation is spiritual, the worship it enjoins simple and easy, and if liberty of conscience be granted, all its exterior order may be regarded under every kind of human government.* This is very true, but it is saying no more, than that the christian worship may be always carried on, if it is not interrupted; a point, I presume, no one will contend with him. The question is, can every form of government furnish a *security* for liberty of conscience; or, which is the same thing, can the rights of private judgment be safe under a government, whose professed principle is, that the subject has no *rights at all,* but is a vassal dependent upon his superior lord. Nor is this a futile or chimerical question, it is founded upon fact. The state to which it alludes, is the condition at present of more than half the nations of Europe; and if there were no better patriots than this author, it would soon be the condition of them all. The blessings which we estimate highly, we are naturally eager to perpetuate, and whoever is acquainted with the value of religious freedom, will not be content to suspend it on the clemency of a prince, the indulgence of ministers, or the liberality of bishops, if ever such a thing existed; he will never think it secure, till it has a constitutional basis; nor even then, till by the general spread of its principles, every individual becomes its guarantee, and every arm ready to be lifted up in its defence. Forms of policy may change, or

they may survive the spirit that produced them; but when the seeds of knowledge have been once sown, and have taken root in the human mind, they will advance with a steady growth, and even flourish in those alarming scenes of anarchy and confusion, in which the settled order and regular machinery of government are wrecked and disappear.

Christianity, we see then, instead of weakening our attachment to the principles of freedom, or withdrawing them from our attention, renders them doubly dear to us, by giving us an interest in them, proportioned to the value of those religious privileges which they secure and protect.

Our author endeavours to cast reproach on the advocates for liberty, by attempting to discredit their piety, for which purpose he assures us, to be active in this cause is disreputable, and brings the reality of our religion into just suspicion. *Who are the persons,* he asks, *that embark? Are they the spiritual, humble, and useful teachers, who travail in birth, till Christ be formed in the hearts of their hearers? No. They are philosophical opposers of the grand peculiarities of christianity.* It is of little consequence of what descriptions of persons the friends of freedom consist, provided their principles are just, and their arguments well founded; but here, as in other places, the author displays an utter ignorance of facts. Men who know no age but their own, must draw their precedents from it; or, if Mr. ——— had glanced

only towards the history of England, he must have remembered, that in the reigns of Charles the First and Second, the chief friends of freedom were the puritans, of whom many were republicans, and the remainder zealously attached to a *limited* monarchy. It is to the distinguished exertions of this party, we are in a great measure indebted for the preservation of our free and happy constitution. In those distracted and turbulent times which preceded the restoration of Charles the Second, the puritans, who to a devotion the most fervent, united an eager attachment to the doctrines of grace, as they are commonly called, displayed on every occasion a love of freedom, pushed almost to excess; whilst the cavaliers, their opponents, who ridiculed all that was serious, and, if they had any religion at all, held sentiments directly repugnant to the tenets of Calvin, were the firm supporters of arbitrary power. If the unitarians, then, are at present distinguished for their zeal in the cause of freedom, it cannot be imputed to any alliance between their religious and political opinions, but to the conduct natural to a minority, who, attempting bold innovations, and maintaining sentiments very different from those which are generally held, are sensible they can only shelter themselves from persecution and reproach, and gain an impartial hearing from the public, by throwing down the barriers of prejudice, and claiming an unlimited freedom of thought.

4th. Though christianity does not assume any

immediate direction in the affairs of government, it inculcates those duties, and recommends that spirit, which will ever prompt us to cherish the principles of freedom. It teaches us to check every selfish passion, to consider ourselves as parts of a great community, and to abound in all the fruits of an active benevolence. The particular operation of this principle will be regulated by circumstances as they arise, but our obligation to cultivate it is clear and indubitable. As this author does not pretend that the nature of a government has no connexion with the felicity of those who are the subjects of it, he cannot without the utmost inconsistence deny, that to watch over the interests of our fellow-creatures in this respect, is a branch of the great duty of social benevolence. If we are bound to protect a neighbour, or even an enemy, from violence, to give him raiment when he is naked, or food when he is hungry, much more ought we to do our part, toward the preservation of a free government; the only basis on which the enjoyment of these blessings can securely rest. He who breaks the fetters of slavery, and delivers a nation from thraldom, forms, in my opinion, the noblest comment on the great law of love, whilst he distributes the greatest blessing which man can receive from man; but next to that is the merit of him, who, in times like the present, watches over the edifice of public liberty, repairs its foundations, and strengthens its cement, when he beholds it hastening to decay.

It is not in the power of every one, it is true, to benefit his age, or country, in this distinguished manner, and accordingly it is no where expressly commanded; but where this ability exists, it is not diminished by our embracing christianity, which consecrates every talent to the public good. On whomsoever distinguished endowments are bestowed, as christians we ought to rejoice, when instead of being wasted in vain or frivolous pursuits, we behold them employed on objects of the greatest general concern; amongst which those principles of freedom will ever be reckoned, which determine the destiny of nations, and the collective felicity of the human race.

5th. Our author expresses an ardent desire for the approach of that period, when all men will be christians. I have no doubt that this event will take place, and rejoice in the prospect of it; but whenever it arrives, it will be fatal to Mr. ———'s favourite principles; for the professors of christianity must then become politicians, as the wicked, on whom he at present very politely devolves the business of government, will be no more: or, perhaps, he indulges a hope, that even then, there will be a sufficient number of sinners left, to conduct political affairs, especially as wars will then cease, and social life be less frequently disturbed by rapine and injustice. It will still, however, be a great hardship, that a handful of the wicked should rule innumerable multitudes of the just, and cannot fail, according to our present conceptions, to operate

as a kind of check on piety and virtue. How Mr. ——— will settle this point I cannot pretend to say, except he imagines men will be able to subsist without any laws or civil regulations, or intends to revive the long exploded tradition of Papias, respecting the personal reign.

Had christianity been intended only for the benefit of a few, or as the distinction of a small fraternity, there might have been some pretence for setting its profession in opposition to human policy, since it might then have been conducted without their interference; but a religion, which is formed for the whole world, and will finally be embraced by all its inhabitants, can never be clogged with any such impediment, as would render it repugnant to the social existence of mankind.

Section II.

On the Duty of Ministers in Respect to Civil Polity.

Mr. ——— is extremely severe upon those of his brethren, who, forsaking the quiet duties of their profession, as he styles them, have dared to interfere in public affairs. This he considers a most flagrant offence, an alarming departure from their proper province; and in the fulness of his rage, he heaps upon them every epithet which contempt or indignation can suggest; calls them meddling, convivial, political ministers, devoid of all seriousness and dignity. It is rather extraordinary,

this severe correction should be administered by a man, who is, at that moment, guilty of the offence he is chastising; reproaches political preachers in a political sermon; ridicules theories of government, and at the same time advances one of his own, a most wretched one indeed, but delivered in a tone the most arrogant and decisive. It is not political discussion then, it seems, that has ruffled the gentle serenity of our author's temper; for he too, we see, can bend, when it pleases him, from his spiritual elevation, and let fall his oracular responses on the duty of subjects and of kings. But the persons on whom he denounces his anathemas have presumed to adopt a system of politics inconsistent with his own, and it is less his piety than his pride, that is shocked and offended. Instead of submitting to be moulded by any adept in cringes, and posture-master of servility, they have dared to assume the bold and natural port of freemen.

It will be unnecessary to say much on the duty of ministers, in respect to political affairs, as many of the reflections which this subject would suggest, have been already advanced under a former head. A few considerations, however, present themselves here, to which I shall beg the reader's attention.

The duties of the ministerial character, it will on all hands be confessed, are of a nature the most sacred and important. To them should be directed the first and chief attention of every person who sustains it, and whatever is found to interfere with

these momentous engagements, should be relinquished as criminal and improper. But there is no profession which occupies the mind so fully, as not to leave many intervals of leisure, in which objects that lie out of its immediate province, will have a share of our attention; and I see not, why these periods of recess may not be employed with as much dignity and advantage, in acquiring an acquaintance with the principles of government, as wasted in frivolous amusements, or an inactive indolence. Mr. ———, with his usual confidence, lays it down as a maxim, that the science of politics cannot be cultivated, without a neglect of ministerial duties; and one would almost be tempted to suppose, he had published his sermon as a confirmation of this remark; for a more striking example of political ignorance in a teacher of religion, has scarcely ever been exhibited. As far, therefore, as the preacher himself is concerned, the observation will be admitted in its full force, but he has surely no right to make his own weakness the standard of another's strength.

Political science, as far as it falls under our present contemplation, may be considered in two points of view. It may either intend a discussion of the great objects for which governments are formed, or it may intend a consideration of the means which may be employed, and the particular contrivances that may be fallen upon to accomplish those objects. For example, in vindicating the revolution in France, two distinct methods

may be pursued with equal propriety and success. It may be defended upon its *principles* against the friends of arbitrary power, by displaying the value of freedom, the equal rights of mankind, the folly and injustice of those regal or aristocratic pretensions by which those rights were invaded; accordingly, in this light it has been justified with the utmost success. Or it may be defended upon its *expedients*, by exhibiting the elements of government which it has composed, the laws it has enacted, and the tendency of both to extend and perpetuate that liberty which is its ultimate object. But though each of these modes of discussion fall within the province of politics, it is obvious the degree of inquiry, of knowledge, and of labour they require, differs widely. The first is a path which has been often and successfully trod, turns upon principles which are common to all times and places, and which demand little else to enforce conviction, than calm and dispassionate attention. The latter method, involving a question of expediency, not of right, would lead into a vast field of detail, would require a thorough acquaintance with the situation of persons and of things, as well as long and intimate acquaintance with human affairs. There are but few ministers who have capacity or leisure to become great practical politicians. To explore the intricacies of commercial science, to penetrate the refinements of negociation, to determine with certainty and precision the balance of power, are under-

takings, it will be confessed, which lie very remote from the ministerial department; but the *principles* of government, as it is a contrivance for securing the freedom and happiness of men, may be acquired with great ease.

These principles our ancestors understood well, and it would be no small shame if, in an age which boasts so much light and improvement as the present, they were less familiar to us. There is no class of men to whom this species of knowledge is so requisite, on several accounts, as dissenting ministers. The jealous policy of the establishment forbids our youth admission into the celebrated seats of learning; our own seminaries, at least, till lately, were almost entirely confined to candidates for the ministry; and as on both these accounts, amongst us, the intellectual improvement of our religious teachers rises superior to that of private christians, in a greater degree than in the national church, the influence of their opinions is wider in proportion. Disclaiming, as they do, all pretensions to dominion, their public character, their professional leisure, the habits of study and composition which they acquire, concur to point them out as the natural guardians, in some measure, of our liberties and rights. Besides, as they are appointed to teach the whole compass of social duty, the mutual obligations of rulers and subjects will, of necessity, fall under their notice, and they cannot explain or enforce the *reasons* of submission without displaying the

proper end of government, and the *expectations* we may naturally form from it; which, when accurately done, will lead into the very depths of political science.

There is another reason, however, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, flowing from the nature of an established religion, why dissenting ministers, above all men, should be well skilled in the principles of freedom. Wherever, as in England, religion is established by law with splendid emoluments and dignities annexed to its profession, the clergy who are candidates for these distinctions, will ever be prone to exalt the prerogative, not only in order to strengthen the arm on which they lean, but that they may the more successfully ingratiate themselves in the favour of the prince, by flattering those ambitious views and passions which are too readily entertained by persons possessed of supreme power. The boasted alliance between church and state, on which so many encomiums have been lavished, seems to have been little more than a compact between the priest and the magistrate, to betray the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious. To this the clergy on their part at least have continued steady, shunning inquiry, fearful of change, blind to the corruptions of government, skilful to *discern the signs of the times,* and eager to improve every opportunity, and to employ all their art and eloquence to extend the prerogative, and smooth the approaches of arbitrary power. Individuals are illustrious excep-

tions to this censure; it however applies to the body, to none more than to those whose exalted rank and extensive influence determine its complexion and spirit. In this situation, the leaders of that church, in their fatal attempt to recommend and embellish a slavish system of principles, will, I trust, be ever carefully watched and opposed by those who hold a similar station amongst the dissenters; that, at all events, there may remain one asylum to which insulted freedom may retire unmolested. These considerations are sufficient to justify every dissenting minister in well-timed exertions for the public cause, and from them we may learn what opinion to entertain of Mr.———'s weak and malignant invectives.

From the general strain of his discourse, it would be natural to conclude he was an enemy to every interference of ministers on political occasions; but this is not the case. *Ministers,* says he, *may interfere as peace-makers, and by proper methods should counteract the spirit of faction raised by persons who seem born to vex the state.* After having taught them to remain in a quiet neutrality, he invests them all at once with the high character of arbiters between the contending parties, without considering that an office of so much delicacy would demand a most intimate acquaintance with the pretensions of both. Ministers it should seem, instead of declining political interference, are to become such adepts in the science of government, as to distinguish with

precision the complaints of an oppressed party from the clamours of a faction, to hold the balance between the ruler and the subject with a steady hand, *and to point out, on every occasion, and counteract the persons who are born to vex the state.* If any should demand by what means they are to furnish themselves for such extraordinary undertakings, he will learn that it is not by political investigation or inquiry this profound skill is to be attained, but by a studied inattention and neglect; of which this author, it must be confessed, has given his disciples a most edifying example in his first essay. There is something miraculous in these endowments. This battle is not to the strong, nor these riches to men of understanding. Our author goes a step farther, for when he is in the humour for concessions no man can be more liberal. *So far as revolutions,* says he, *are parts of God's plan of government, a christian is not to hinder such changes in states as promise an increase of happiness to mankind. But no where in the New Testament can a christian find countenance in becoming a forward active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* A christian is not to oppose revolutions, as far as they are parts of God's plan of government. The direction which oracles afford, has ever been complained of for its obscurity; and this of Mr. ———, though no doubt it is fraught with the profoundest wisdom, would have been more useful had it furnished some criterion to distinguish those transactions which *are*

parts of God's plan of government. We have hitherto imagined the elements of nature, and the whole agency of man, are comprehended within the system of Divine Providence; but, as in this sense every thing becomes a part of the divine plan, it cannot be his meaning. Perhaps he means to confine the phrase *of God's plan of government* to that portion of human agency which is consistent with the divine will and promises, or, as he says with an increase of happiness to mankind. If this should be his intention, the sentiment is just, but utterly subversive of the purpose for which it is introduced, as it concurs with the principle of all reformers in leaving us no other direction in these cases than reason and experience, determined in their exertions by a regard to the general happiness of mankind. On this basis the wildest projectors profess to erect their improvements. On this principle, too, do the dissenters proceed, when they call for a repeal of the test act, when they lament the unequal representation of parliament, when they wish to see a period to ministerial corruption, and to the encroachments of an hierarchy equally servile and oppressive; and thus, by one unlucky concession, this author has admitted the ground-work of reform in its fullest extent, and has demolished the whole fabric he was so eager to rear. He must not be offended if principles thus corrupt, and thus feebly supported, should meet with the contempt they deserve, but must seek his consolation in his own

adage, as the correction of folly is certainly *a part of God's plan of government.* The reader can be at no loss to determine, whom the author intends by a *busy active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* The occasion of the sermon, and complexion of its sentiments, concur in directing us to Dr. Priestley; a person whom the author seems to regard with a more than *odium theologicum,* with a rancour exceeding the measure even of his profession. The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favoured, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide.*

* Whether or not the beautiful passage in the text was suggested by a floating vague recollection of the following lines of

It is a pity, however, our author in reproaching characters so illustrious was not a little more attentive to facts; for unfortunately for him, Dr. Priestley has not in any instance displayed that disaffection to government, with which he has been charged so wantonly. In his Lectures on History, and his Essay on Civil Government, which of all his publications fall most properly within the sphere of politics, he has delineated the British constitution with great accuracy, and has expressed his warm admiration of it as the best system of policy the sagacity of man has been able to contrive. In his Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, a much later work, where the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered which produced the late riots, he has renewed that declaration, and has informed us, that he has been pleasantly ridiculed by his friends as being an unitarian in religion, and a trinitarian in politics. He has lamented, indeed, in common

POPE, or were an avowed imitation of them, cannot now be determined. But be this as it may, I think it will be readily admitted, that the rhythm and harmony of the passage in prose are decidedly superior to those in the lines of the poet:

"Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue,
But, like a shadow, prove the substance true:
For envied wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known
Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too powerful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays;
But e'en those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories and augment the day."—ED.

with every enlightened citizen, the existence of certain corruptions, which, being gradually introduced into the constitution, have greatly impaired its vigour; but in this he has had the honour of being followed by the prime minister himself, who began his career by proposing a reform in parliament, merely to court popularity it is true, at a time when it would not have been so safe for him to insult the friends of freedom after having betrayed their interest, as he has since found it.

Dr. Priestley has, moreover, defended with great ability and success the principles of our dissent, exposing, as the very nature of the undertaking demands, the folly and injustice of all clerical usurpations; and on this account, if on no other, he is entitled to the gratitude of his brethren. In addition to this catalogue of crimes, he has ventured to express his satisfaction on the liberation of France; an event, which, promising a firmer establishment to liberty than any recorded in the annals of the world, is contemplated by the friends of arbitrary power throughout every kingdom of Europe with the utmost concern. These are the demerits of Dr. Priestley, for which this political astrologist and sacred calculator of nativities, pronounces upon him that he is *born to vex the state.* The best apology candour can suggest, will be to hope Mr. ——— has never read Dr. Priestley's political works; a conjecture somewhat confirmed from his disclaiming all attention to political theories, and from the extreme ignorance he

displays, through the whole of his discourse, on political topics. Still it is to be wished he would have condescended to understand what he means to confute, if it had been only to save himself the trouble and disgrace of this publication.

The manner in which he speaks of the Birmingham riots, and the cause to which he traces them, are too remarkable to pass unnoticed.

When led, says he, speaking of the sufferers, *by officious zeal, from the quiet duties of their profession into the Senator's province: unhallowed boisterous passions in others, like their own, God may permit to chastise them.* For my own part I was some time before I could develope this extraordinary passage; but I now find the darkness in which it is veiled is no more than that mystic sublimity, which has always tinctured the language of those who are appointed to interpret the counsels of heaven.

I would not have Mr. ——— deal too freely in these visions, lest the fire and illumination of the prophet should put out the reason of the man, a caution the more necessary in the present instance, as it glimmers so feebly already in several parts of his discourse, that its extinction would not be at all extraordinary. We are, no doubt, much obliged to him for letting us into a secret we could never have learnt any other way. We thank him heartily for informing us that the Birmingham riots were a judgement, and, as we would wish to be grateful for such an important communication,

we would whisper in his ear in return, that he should be particularly careful not to suffer this itch of prophesying to grow upon him, men being extremely apt in this degenerate age to mistake a prophet for a madman, and to lodge them in the same place of confinement. The best use he could make of his mantle would be to bequeath it to the use of posterity, as for the want of it I am afraid they will be in danger of falling into some very unhappy mistakes. To their unenlightened eyes it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century, an age that boasts its science and improvement, the first philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished, and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee an outcast and a fugitive from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion, who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment, and imagine they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals. Erroneous as such a judgment must appear in the eyes of Mr. ———, nothing but a ray of his supernatural light could enable us to form a juster decision. Dr. Priestley and his friends are not the first that have suffered in a public cause; and when we recollect, that those who have sustained similar disasters have been generally conspicuous for a superior sanctity of character, what but an acquaintance with the counsels of heaven can enable us to distinguish between these two classes

of sufferers, and, whilst one are the favourites of God, to discern in the other the objects of his vengeance. When we contemplate this extraordinary endowment, we are no longer surprised at the superiority he assumes through the whole of his discourse, nor at that air of confusion and disorder which appears in it, both of which we impute to his dwelling so much in the insufferable light, and amidst the coruscations and flashes of the divine glory; a sublime but perilous situation, described with great force and beauty by Mr. Gray.

"He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble, while they gaze,
He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night."

Section III.

On the Pretences Mr. ——— advances in favour of his Principles.

Having endeavoured to justify the well-timed exertions of christians and of ministers, in the cause of freedom, it may not be improper to examine a little more particularly under what pretences Mr. ——— presumes to condemn this conduct.

1st. The first that naturally presents itself, is drawn from those passages of scripture, in which the design of civil government is explained, and the duty of submission to civil authority is enforced. That on which the greatest stress is laid, is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Ro-

mans. "Let every soul be subject to the higher "powers; for there is no power but of God: the "powers which be, are ordained of God. Whoever "therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordi- "nance of God: and they that resist, shall receive "unto themselves damnation. The Ruler is the "Minister of God to thee for good. But if thou "doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth "not the sword in vain. Wherefore ye must be "subject, not only for wrath, but conscience sake." This passage, which, from the time of Sir Robert Filmer to the present day, has been the strong hold of the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, will admit of an easy solution, by attending to the nature of christianity, and the circumstances of its professors, during the period in which it was written. The extraordinary privileges and dignity conferred by the gospel on believers, must have affected the minds of the first christians, just emerging from the shades of ignorance, and awakened to new hopes, with singular force. Feeling an elevation to which they were strangers before, and looking down upon the world around them, as the vassals of sin and Satan, they might be easily tempted to imagine, the restraint of laws could not extend to persons so highly privileged, and that it was ignominious in the free men of Jesus Christ to submit to the yoke of idolatrous rulers. Natural to their situation as these sentiments might be, none could be conceived more detrimental to the credit and propagation of a

rising religion, or more likely to draw down upon its professors the whole weight of the Roman empire, with which they were in no condition to contend. In this situation, it was proper for the apostle to remind christians, their religion did not interfere with the rights of princes, or diminish their obligation to attend to those salutary regulations, which are established for the protection of innocence, and the punishment of the guilty. That this only was the intention of the writer, may be inferred from the considerations he adduces to strengthen his advice. He does not draw his arguments for submission from any thing *peculiar* to the *christian system*, as he must have done, had he intended to oppose that religion to the natural rights of mankind, but from the utility and necessity of civil restraints. "The Ruler is the Minister of God to thee for good," is the reason he urges for submission. Civil government, as if he had said, is a salutary institution, appointed to restrain and punish outrage and injustice, but exhibiting to the quiet and inoffensive, nothing of which they need to be afraid. "If thou doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain." He is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Christians were not to consider themselves privileged above their fellow-citizens, as their religion conferred upon them no civil immunities, but left them subject to all the ties and restraints, whatever they were, which could be justly imposed by the civil power on any other part of mankind.

The limits of every duty must be determined by its *reasons*, and the only ones assigned *here*, or that *can* be assigned for submission to civil authority, are its *tendency to do good;* wherever therefore this shall cease to be the case, submission becomes absurd, having no longer any *rational view*. But at what time this evil shall be judged to have arrived, or what remedy it may be proper to apply, christianity does not decide, but leaves to be determined by an appeal to natural reason and right. By one of the strongest misconceptions in the world, when we are taught that christianity does not bestow upon us any *new* rights, it has been thought to strip us of our *old;* which is just the same as it would be to conclude, because it did not first furnish us with hands or feet, it obliges us to cut them off.

Under every form of government, that civil order which affords protection to property, and tranquillity to individuals, must be obeyed; and I have no doubt, that before the revolution in France, they who are now its warmest admirers, had they lived there, would have yielded a quiet submission to its laws, as being conscious, the social compact can only be considered as dissolved by an expression of the general will. In the mean time, they would have continued firm in avowing the principles of freedom, and by the diffusion of political knowledge, have endeavoured to train and prepare the minds of their fellow-citizens for accomplishing a change so desirable.

It is not necessary to enter into a particular examination of the other texts adduced by Mr. ——— in support of his sentiments, as this in Romans is by much the most to his purpose, and the remarks that have been made upon it may, with very little alteration, be applied to the rest. He refers us to the second chapter of the first Epistle of Peter. "Submit yourselves to every "ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether "it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors "as unto them that are sent by him, for the "punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of "them that do well." Here it is sufficient to remark, all that can be inferred from this passage is, that christians are not to hold themselves exempt from the obligation of obedience on account of their religion, but are to respect legislation as far as it is found productive of benefit in social life.

With still less propriety, he urges the first of Timothy, where, in the second chapter, we are "exhorted to supplications, prayers, intercessions, "and giving of thanks for all men, for kings, and "for all that are in authority, that we may lead "a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and "honesty." I am unacquainted with any who refuse a compliance with this apostolical admonition, except the nonjurors* may be reckoned of this class, whose political sentiments are of a piece with our author's.

* There are now no "nonjurors": the people, once so called, have, for many years, prayed for the king.—Ed.

Whilst he pleads with so much eagerness for the duty of passive obedience, we are not, however, to suppose, he wishes to extend it to all mankind. He admits, *that society, under the wisest regulations, will degenerate, and there will be periods when associated bodies must be resolved again into their first principles.* All resistance to authority, every revolution, is not in his own opinion criminal; it is christians only, who are never to have a share in these transactions, never to assert their rights. With what different sentiments did the apostle of the Gentiles contemplate his character, when disdaining to accept a clandestine dismission from an unjust imprisonment, he felt a glow of indignant pride burn upon his cheek, and exclaimed with a Roman energy, "I was free born!"

2d. Another reason which this author assigns for a blind deference to civil authority is, that christianity is *distinct from, and independent of human legislation.* This principle no protestant dissenter will be inclined to question, but, instead of lending any support to the system of passive obedience, it will overturn it from its foundation; for if religion be really distinct from, and independent of human legislation, it cannot afford any standard to ascertain its limits; as the moment it is applied to this purpose, it ceases to be a thing distinct and independent. For example, it is not doubted that a christian may lawfully engage in trade or commerce; but if it be asked why his profession does not interfere with such an under-

taking, the proper reply will be, religion is a thing distinct and independent. Should it be again inquired, why a christian may become a trader, yet must not commit a theft, we should answer, that this latter action is not a thing distinct, or independent of religion, but falls immediately under its cognizance, as a violation of its laws. Thus it appears, that whatever portion of human conduct is really *independent* of religion, is lawful for that *very reason,* and can then only become criminal or improper, when it is suffered to intrench upon more sacred or important duties. The truth is, between two institutions, such as civil government and religion, which have a separate origin and end, no opposition can subsist, but in the brain of a distempered enthusiast.

The author's text confutes his doctrine, for had our Saviour annihilated our rights, he would have become a *judge* and *divider* over us, in the worst sense, if that could be said to be divided, which is taken away. When any two institutions are affirmed to be distinct and independent, it can only mean, they do not *interfere;* but that must be a genius of no common size, who can infer from religion not *interfering* with the rights of mankind, that they cease to be, or that the patrimony, over which our Lord declined to exercise *any authority,* he has scattered and destroyed.

3d. Similar to the last I have considered, is that pretence for excluding christians from any concern in political affairs, taken from the conduct of our

Saviour. Mr. ——— tells us, that Christ uniformly waived interesting himself in the concerns of the then existing government; and to the same purpose he afterwards remarks, he always declined the functions of a civil magistrate.

The most careless reader will remark, the whole weight of this argument rests upon a supposition, that it is unlawful for a christian to sustain any other character in civil life, than that in which our Saviour literally appeared; a notion as extravagant as was ever nourished in the brain of the wildest fanatic. Upon this principle he must have gone through such a succession of offices, and engaged in such an endless variety of undertakings, that in place of thirty-three years, he needed to have lived thirty-three centuries. On this ground the profession of physic is unlawful for a christian, because our Lord never set up a dispensary; and that of law, because he never pleaded at the bar. Next to the weakness of advancing such absurdity, is that of confuting it.

4th. The author, in proof of his political tenets, appeals to the devotional feelings of his hearers. "I ask you," says he, "who make conscience of "entering into your closets, and shutting your "doors, and praying to your Father which seeth "in secret; what subjects interest you most then? "Are not factious passions hushed; the undue "heat you felt in political disputation, remembered "with sorrow?" He must be at a great loss for argument, who will have recourse to such loose

and flimsy declamation. When engaged in devout admiration of the Supreme Being, every other object will be lost in the comparison; but this though the noblest employment of the mind, was never intended to shut out all other concerns.

The affections which unite us to the world, have a large demand upon us, and must succeed in their turn. If every thing is to be deemed criminal, that does not interest the attention in the very moment of worship, political concerns are not the only ones to be abandoned, but every undertaking of a temporal nature, all labour and ingenuity, must cease. Science herself must shroud her light. These are notions rather to be laughed at than confuted, for their extravagance will correct itself. Every attempt that has been made to rear religion on the ruins of nature, or to render it subversive of the economy of life, has hitherto proved unsuccessful, whilst the institutions that have flowed from it, are now scarcely regarded in any other light, than as humiliating monuments of human weakness and folly. The natural vigour of the mind, when it has once been opened by knowledge, and turned towards great and interesting objects, will always overpower the illusions of fanaticism; or, could Mr. ———'s principles be carried into effect, we should soon behold men returning again to the state of savages, and a more than monkish barbarity and ignorance would overspread the earth. That abstraction from the world, it is his purpose to recommend, is in truth

as inconsistent with the nature of religion, as with the state and condition of man; for christianity does not propose to take us *out* of the world, but to preserve us from the pollutions which are *in* it.

It is easy to brand a passion for liberty with the odious epithet of faction; no two things, however, can be more opposite. Faction is a combination of a few to oppress the liberties of many; the love of freedom is the impulse of an enlightened and presiding spirit, ever intent upon the welfare of the community, or body to which it belongs, and ready to give the alarm, when it beholds any unlawful conspiracy formed, whether it be of rulers or of subjects, with a design to oppress it. Every tory upholds a faction; every whig, as far as he is sincere and well informed, is a friend to the equal liberties of mankind. Absurd as the preacher's appeal must appear, on such an occasion, to the devout feelings of his hearers, we have no need to decline it. In those solemn moments, factious passions cannot indeed be too much hushed, but that warmth which animates the patriot, which glowed in the breast of a Sidney or a Hampden, was never chilled, or diminished, we may venture to affirm, in its nearest approaches to the uncreated splendour; and if it mingled with their devotion at all, could not fail to infuse into it a fresh force and vigour, by drawing them into a closer assimilation to that great Being, who appears under the character of the avenger of the oppressed, and the friend and protector of the human race.

5th. Lastly, the author endeavours to discredit the principles of freedom, by holding them up as intimately connected with the unitarian heresy. "We "are not to be surprised," he says, "if men who "vacate the rule of faith in Jesus Christ, should "be defective in deference and in obedient regards "to men, who are raised to offices of superior in- "fluence, for the purposes of civil order and public "good." The persons he has in view are the unitarians, and that my reader may be in full possession of this most curious argument, it may be proper to inform him, that an unitarian is a person who believes Jesus Christ had no existence till he appeared on our earth, whilst a trinitarian maintains, that he existed with the Father from all eternity. What possible connexion can he discern between these opinions and the subject of government?

In order to determine whether the supreme power should be vested in king, lords, and commons, as in England, in an assembly of nobles, as in Venice, or in a house of representatives, as in America or France, must we first decide upon the person of Christ? I should imagine we might as well apply to astronomy first, to learn whether the earth flattens at the poles. He explains what he means by *vacating* the rule of faith in Christ, when he charges the unitarians with a partial denial at least, of the inspiration of the Scripture, particularly the Epistles of St. Paul. But, however clear the inspiration of the Scriptures may be, as no one pleads for the inspiration of civil

governors, the deference which is due to the first, as coming from God, can be no reason for an unlimited submission to the latter. Yet this is Mr. ———'s argument, and it runs thus. Every opposition to scripture is criminal, because it is inspired, and therefore every resistance to temporal rulers is criminal, though they are *not* inspired.

The number of passages in Paul's Epistles, which treat of civil government, is small, the principal of them have been examined, and whether they are inspired or not, has not the remotest relation to the question before us. The inspiration of an author adds weight to his sentiments, but makes no alteration in his meaning, and unless Mr. ——— can shew that Paul inculcates unlimited submission, the belief of his inspiration can yield no advantage to his cause. Amongst those parties of christians who have maintained the inspiration of the Scriptures in its utmost extent, the number of such as have inferred from them the doctrine of passive obedience, has been extremely small; it is, therefore, ridiculous to impute the rejection of this tenet by unitarians, to a disbelief of plenary inspiration. It behoves Mr. ——— to point out, if he is able, any one of the unitarians, who ever imagined that Paul means to recommend unlimited obedience; for till that is the case, it is plain their political opinions cannot have arisen from any contempt of that apostle's authority.

As there is no foundation in the nature of things, for imagining any alliance between heretical tenets

and the principles of freedom, this notion is equally void of support from fact or history. Were the socinian sentiments, in particular, productive of any *peculiar impatience under* the restraints of government, this effect could not fail of having made its appearance on their first rise in Poland, while their influence was fresh and vigorous; but nothing of this nature occurred, nor was any such reproach cast upon them. That sect in England which has been always most conspicuous for the love of freedom, has for the most part held sentiments, at the greatest remove from socinianism that can be imagined. The seeds of those political principles which broke out with such vigour in the reign of Charles the First, and have since given rise to the denomination of whigs, were sown in the latter end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by the hand of the puritans, amongst whom the unitarian doctrine was then utterly unknown. The dissenters descended from those illustrious ancestors, and inheriting their spirit, have been foremost in defence of liberty, not only, or chiefly, of late, since the spread of the socinian doctrine, but before that system had gained any footing amongst us.

The knowledge and study of the Scriptures, far from favouring the pretensions of despotism, have almost ever diminished it, and been attended with a proportional increase of freedom. The union of protestant princes preserved the liberties of the Germanic body, when they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the victorious arm of

Charles the Fifth; yet a veneration for the Scriptures, at a time when they had almost fallen into oblivion, and an appeal to their decisions in all points, was the grand characteristic of the new religion. If we look into Turkey, we shall find the least of that impatience under restraints, which Mr. ——— laments, of any place in the world, though Paul and his epistles are not much studied there.

There are not wanting reasons, which at first view might induce us to conclude, unitarianism was less favourable to the love of freedom than almost any other system of religious belief. If any party of christians were ever free from the least tincture of enthusiasm, it is the unitarian: yet that passion has by every philosopher been judged friendly to liberty; and to its influence, though perhaps improperly, some of its most distinguished exertions have been ascribed. Hume and Bolingbroke, who were atheists, leaned towards arbitrary power. Owen, Howe, Milton, Baxter, some of the most devout and venerable characters that ever appeared, were warmly attached to liberty, and held sentiments on the subject of government as free and unfettered as Dr. Priestley. Thus every pretence for confounding the attachment to freedom with the sentiments of a religious party, is most abundantly confuted both from reason and from fact. The zeal unitarians have displayed in defence of civil and religious liberty, is the spirit natural to a minority, who are well aware they are

viewed by the ecclesiastical powers with an unparalleled malignity and rancour. Let the dissenters at large remember they too are a minority, a great minority, and that they must look for their security from the same quarter, not from the compliments of bishops, or presents from maids of honour.*

To abandon principles, which the best and most enlightened men have in all ages held sacred, which the dissenters in particular have rendered themselves illustrious by defending, which have been sealed and consecrated by the blood of our ancestors, for no other reason than that the unitarians chance to maintain them, would be a weakness of which a child might be ashamed! Whoever may think fit to take up the gauntlet in the socinian controversy will have my warmest good wishes; but let us not employ those arms against each other which were given us for our common defence.

Section IV.

On the Test Act.

Amidst all the wild eccentricities, which, abounding in every part of this extraordinary publication,

* Some of my readers perhaps need to be informed that I here allude to Mr. Martin, who, for similar services to those Mr. ——— is now performing, has been considerably caressed by certain bishops, who have condescended to notice and to visit him. I think we do not read that Judas had any acquaintance with the high priests till he came to transact business with them.

naturally diminish our wonder at any thing such a writer may advance, I confess I am surprised at his declaring his wish for the continuance of the Test Act. This law, enacted in the latter end of the reign of Charles the Second, to secure the nation from popery, when it stood upon the brink of that precipice, is continued, now that the danger no longer exists which first occasioned it, for the express purpose of preserving the church from the inroads of dissenters. That church, it must be remembered, existed for ages before it received any such protection; yet it is now the vogue to magnify its importance to that degree, that one would imagine it was its sole prop, whose removal would draw the whole fabric after it, or at least make it totter to its base. Whether these apprehensions were really entertained by the clergy who gave the signal for the commencement of hostilities on a late occasion, or whether they were only impelled by that illiberal tincture, and fixed antipathy to all who differ from them, which hath ever marked their character, may be doubted; but to behold a dissenting minister joining with them in an unnatural warfare against his brethren, is a phenomenon so curious, that it prompts us to inquire into its cause. Let us hear his reasons. He and many others were convinced, he tells us, "that some of the persons who applied for the "repeal were influenced by enmity against the "doctrinal articles of the established church, and "they could not sacrifice their pious regard to

"truth, though in a church they had separated "from, to the policy of men, who with respect "to God our Saviour only consult how they may "cast him down from his excellency." When we hear the clergy exclaim that their church is in danger, we pretty well understand what they mean; they speak broad, as Mr. Burke says, and intend no more than that its emoluments are endangered; but when a serious dissenter expresses his pious regard to the doctrines of the church, it is the *truth* of those articles he must be supposed to have in view. Let us consider for a moment what advantage the Test Act is capable of yielding them. All those who qualify for civil offices, by a submission to this law, consist of two classes of people; they are either persons who are attached to the articles of the church, from whom therefore no danger could accrue; or they are persons who have signified their assent to doctrines which they inwardly disapprove, and who have qualified themselves for trust by a solemn act of religious deception. It is this latter class alone, it should be remembered, whom the Test Act can at all influence, and thus the only security this celebrated law can afford the articles of the church, is founded in a flagrant violation of truth in the persons who become their guarantees. Every attempt that has been made to uphold religion by the civil arm, has reflected disgrace upon its authors; but of all that are recorded in the history of the

world, perhaps this is the most absurd in its principle, and the least effectual in its operation. For the truth of sacred mysteries in religion, it appeals to the corruptest principles of the human heart, and to those *only;* for no one can be tempted by the Test Act, to profess an attachment to the doctrines of the church, till he has been already allured by the dignity or emolument of a civil office. By compelling all who exercise any function in the state, from the person who aspires to its highest distinctions, to those who fill the meanest offices in it, to profess that concurrence in religious opinions which is known never to exist, it is adapted beyond any other human invention, to spread amongst all orders of men a contempt for sacred institutions, to enthrone hypocrisy, and reduce deception to a system! The truth of any set of opinions can only be perceived by *evidence;* but what evidence can any one derive from the mere mechanical action of receiving bread and wine at the hands of a parish priest? He who believes them already needs not to be initiated by any such ceremony; and by what magic touch those simple elements are to convert the unbeliever, our author, who is master of so many secrets, has not condescended to explain. He will not pretend to impute the first spread of these doctrines in the infancy of the christian religion, or their revival at the reformation, to any such means, since he imagines he can trace them in the New Testament. It is strange if that

evidence which was powerful enough to introduce them where they were unknown, is not sufficient to uphold them where they are already professed and believed. At least, the Test Act, it must be confessed, has yielded them no advantage, for they have been controverted with more acrimony, and admitted by a smaller number of persons, since that law was enacted, than in any period preceding.

Were the removal of this test to overthrow the establishment itself, a consequence at the same time in the highest degree improbable, the articles of the church, if they are true, would remain unendangered, their evidence would continue unimpaired, an appeal to the inspired writings from which they profess to be derived would be open, the liberty of discussion would be admitted in as great an extent as at present; this difference only would occur, that an attachment to them would no longer be suspected of flowing from corrupt and sinister motives. They would cease to be with the clergy, the ladder of promotion, the cant of the pulpit, the ridicule of the schools. The futility of this or any other law, as a security to religious doctrines, may be discerned from this single reflection, that in the national church its own articles have, for a length of time, been either treated with contempt, or maintained with little sincerity, and no zeal; whilst amongst the dissenters, where they have had no such aids, they have found a congenial soil, and continue to flourish with vigour.

On the political complexion of this test, as it does not fall so properly within my present view, I shall content myself with remarking, that harmless as it may appear at first sight, it carries in it the seeds of all the persecutions and calamities which have ever been sustained on a religious account. It proscribes not an individual who has been convicted of a crime, but a whole party, as unfit to be trusted by the community to which they belong; and if this stigma can be justly fixed on any set of men, it ought not to stop *here, or any where,* short of the actual excision of those who are thus considered as rotten and incurable members of the political body. In annexing to religious speculation the idea of political default, the principle of this law would justify every excess of severity and rigour. If we are the persons it supposes, its indulgence is weak and contemptible; if we are of a different description, the nature of its pretensions is so extraordinary as to occasion serious alarm, and call aloud for its repeal.

Mr. ———, indeed, calls this, and similar laws, a restraint very prudently imposed upon those who dissent from the established religion.* This restraint, however, is no less than a political annihilation, debarring them, though their talents were ever so splendid, from mingling in the counsels, or possessing any share in the administration of their country. With that natural relish for absurdity, which characterizes this

* Page 6.

author, he imagines they have justly incurred this evil for dissenting from an *erroneous* religion.

He tells us, in the course of his sermon,* that the grand "principle of separation from the "church lies in the unworldly nature of our "Saviour's kingdom." This reason for separation implies, that any attempt to blend worldly interests or policy with the constitution of a church, is improper; but how could this be done more effectually than by rendering the profession of its articles a preliminary step to every kind of civil pre-eminence? Yet this abuse, which in his own estimation is so enormous as to form the great basis of separation, he wishes to perpetuate; and, all things considered, hopes "that which is at "rest will not be disturbed." In another part of his discourse,† he asks what temporalities has the church of Christ to expect? It is the mother of harlots, which says, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Would any one imagine this was the language of a man, who, in pleading for a Test Act, has rested the support of his creed on those very temporalities he affects so much to disdain, and has committed his religion to the arms of that mother of harlots to be reared and nourished! When speaking of the Test Act in the seventh page of his discourse, he thus expresses himself: "Surely the cross of Christ ought not to be insulted by persons eager to press into the temple of Mammon." Who could treat it

* Page 35. † Page 26.

with more poignant severity than is couched in this declaration? yet this is the language of a person who desires its continuance. In truth, his representations on this subject are pregnant with such contradictions, and rise above each other in so singular a gradation of absurdity, as will not be easily conceived, and perhaps hath scarce ever been equalled. At the very outset of his sermon, he declares, "Whenever the gos-"pel is secularized it is debased and misrepre-"sented, and in proportion to the quantity of "foreign infusions is the efficacy of this saving "health diminished." But human ingenuity would be at a loss to contrive a method of secularizing the gospel more completely, than by rendering it the common passport of all who aspire to civil distinctions. I am really weary of exposing the wild and extravagant incoherence of such a reasoner. From a man, who, professing to be the apologist of his party, betrays its interests, and exhibits its most illustrious members to reproach; who, himself a dissenter, applauds the penalties which the hierarchy has inflicted as a "*prudent restraint;*" who, with the utmost poignance, censures a law which he solemnly invokes the legislature to perpetuate; and proposes to secure the truths of religion, by the "profanation of its sacraments,"* by "debasing the gospel," and "insulting the "cross;" any thing may be expected but consistence and decency. When such an author assures

* Page 8.

us he was not impelled by vanity to publish,* we may easily give him credit; but he should remember, though it may be a virtue to subdue vanity, it is base to extinguish shame. The tear which, he tells us, started from the eyes of his audience, we will hope, for their honour, was an effusion of regret, natural to his friends, on hearing him deliver sentiments which they considered as a disgrace to himself, and a calumny on his brethren. His affecting to pour contempt upon Dr. Price, whose talents and character were revered by all parties, and to hold him up as the *corrupter* of the dissenters, will not fail to awaken the indignation of every generous mind. Whether *they* were greater friends to their country, whose pride and oppression scattered the flames of discord across the Atlantic, poured desolation into the colonies, dismembered the empire, and involved us in millions of debt; or the man, who, with a warning voice, endeavoured to avert those calamities, posterity will decide.

He gives us a pompous enumeration† of the piety, learning, and talents of a large body of his brethren who concur with him in a disapprobation of the theological and political tenets of the unitarians. The weakness of mingling them together has been shewn already; but if these great and eminent men, whom the world never heard of before, possess that zeal for their religion they pretend, let them meet their opponents on the

* Page 6. † Ibid.

open field of controversy, where they may display their talents and prowess to somewhat more advantage than in *skulking* behind a *consecrated altar.*

There are many particulars, in the address and sermon, of an extraordinary complexion, which I have not noticed at all, as it was not my intention to follow the author step by step, but rather to collect his scattered representations into some leading points of view. For the same reason, I make no remarks on his barbarous imagery; or his style, every where incoherent and incorrect, sometimes indecent, which cannot fail of disgusting every reader of taste. In a rude daubing peculiar to himself, where, in ridicule of Dr. Priestley, he has grouped together a *foreigner,* a *ship,* and *cargo* of *drugs,* he has unfortunately sketched his own likeness, except in the circumstance of the *ship,* with tolerable accuracy; for, without the apology of having been *skipped* into England, he is certainly a *foreigner* in his native tongue, and his publication will be allowed to be a *drug.*

Had he known to apply the remark with which his address commences, on the utility of accommodating instruction to the exigence of times, he would have been aware, that this is not a season for drawing off the eyes of mankind from political objects. They were, in fact, never turned towards them with equal ardour, and we may venture to affirm, they will long continue to take that direction. An attention to the political aspect of the

world, is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind, but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal, with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps, than any which has been known, in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close.* Events have taken place, of late, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extravagant; and their influence is yet far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated, with the profoundest attention, by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his

* This glowing picture, as accurately descriptive of recent events as of those it was intended to portray, might tempt us almost to fancy, that, after the revolution of a cycle of forty years, time had brought us back to the same state of things.—Ed.

eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary! These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature, to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have been long held in veneration, as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age hath cemented and confirmed, which power hath supported, which eloquence hath conspired to embellish and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach.

Some beneficial effects appear to have taken place already, sufficient to nourish our most sanguine hope of benefits much more extensive. The mischief and folly of wars begin to be understood, and that mild and liberal system of policy adopted, which has ever indeed been the object of prayer to the humane and the devout, but has hitherto remained utterly unknown in the cabinets of princes. As the mind naturally yields to the impression of objects which it contemplates often, we need not wonder, if, amidst events so extraordinary, the human character itself should appear to be altering and improving apace. That fond attachment to ancient institutions, and blind submission to opinions already received, which has ever checked the growth of improvement, and drawn on the greatest benefactors of mankind danger or neglect, is giving

way to a spirit of bold and fearless investigation. Man seems to be becoming more erect and independent. He leans more on himself, less on his fellow-creatures. He begins to feel a consciousness in a higher degree of personal dignity, and is less enamoured of artificial distinctions. There is some hope of our beholding that simplicity and energy of character which marks his natural state, blended with the humanity, the elegance, and improvement of polished society.

The events which have already taken place, and the further changes they forebode, will open to the contemplative of every character, innumerable sources of reflection. To the philosopher they present many new and extraordinary facts, where his penetration will find ample scope in attempting to discover their cause, and to predict their effects. He will have an opportunity of viewing mankind in an interesting situation, and of tracing the progress of opinion through channels it has rarely flowed in before. The politician will feel his attention powerfully awakened, on seeing new maxims of policy introduced, new institutions established, and such a total alteration in the ideas of a great part of the world, as will oblige him to study the art of government as it were afresh. The devout mind will behold in these momentous changes the finger of God, and, discerning in them the dawn of that glorious period, in which wars will cease, and antichristian tyranny shall fall, will adore that unerring wisdom, whose secret operation never

fails to conduct all human affairs to their proper issue, and impels the great actors on that troubled theatre, to fulfil, when they least intend it, the counsels of heaven, and the predictions of its prophets.

AN APOLOGY

FOR THE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

AND FOR

GENERAL LIBERTY:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

REMARKS ON BISHOP HORSLEY'S SERMON,

Preached on the 30th January, 1793.

[PUBLISHED IN 1793.]

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

SINCE this pamphlet was first published, the principles it aims to support have received confirmation from such a train of disastrous events, that it might have been hoped we should have learned those lessons from misfortunes, which reason had failed to impress. Uninstructed by our calamities, we still persist in an impious attack on the liberties of France, and are eager to take our part in the great drama of crimes which is acting on the continent of Europe. Meantime the violence and injustice of the internal administration keeps pace with our iniquities abroad. Liberty and truth are silenced. An unrelenting system of prosecution prevails. The cruel and humiliating sentence passed upon Mr. Muir, and Mr. Palmer, men of unblemished morals and of the purest patriotism, the outrages committed on Dr. Priestley, and his intended removal to America, are events which will mark the latter end of the eighteenth century with indelible reproach. But what has liberty to expect from a minister, who has the audacity to assert the King's right to land as many foreign troops

as he pleases, without the previous consent of Parliament? If this doctrine be true, the boasted equilibrium of the constitution, all the barriers which the wisdom of our ancestors have opposed to the encroachments of arbitrary power, are idle, ineffectual precautions. For we have only to suppose for a moment, an inclination in the royal breast to overturn our liberties, and of what avail is the nicest internal arrangement against a foreign force? Our constitution, on this principle, is the absurdest system that was ever conceived; pretending liberty for its object, yet providing no security against the great antagonist and destroyer of liberty, the employment of military power by the chief magistrate. Let a foreign army be introduced into this or any other country, and quartered upon the subject without his consent, and what is there wanting, if such were the design of the prince, to complete the subjection of that country? Will armed foreigners be overawed by written laws or unwritten customs, by the legal limitations of power, the paper lines of demarcation? But Mr. Pitt contends, that though the sovereign may land foreign troops at his pleasure, he cannot subsist them without the aid of Parliament. He may overrun his dominions with a mercenary army, it seems, but after he has subdued his subjects, he is compelled to have recourse to them for supplies. What a happy contrivance! Unfortunately, however, it is found that princes with the unlimited command of armies, have hit

upon a nearer and more efficacious method of raising supplies than by an act of Parliament. But it is needless any farther to expose the effrontery, or detect the sophistry, of this shameless apostate. The character of Pitt is written in sunbeams. A veteran in frauds while in the bloom of youth, betraying first, and then persecuting, his earliest friends and connexions, falsifying every promise, and violating every political engagement, ever making the fairest professions a prelude to the darkest actions, punishing with the utmost rigour the publisher of the identical paper he himself had circulated,* are traits in the conduct of Pitt, which entitle him to a fatal preeminence in guilt. The qualities of this man balance in an extraordinary manner, and sustain each other: the influence of his station, the extent of his enormities, invest him with a kind of splendour, and the contempt we feel for his meanness and duplicity, is lost in the dread of his machinations, and the abhorrence of his crimes. Too long has he insulted the patience of his countrymen; nor ought we, when we observe the indifference with which the iniquities of Pitt's administration are viewed, to reproach the Romans for tamely submitting to the tyranny of Caligula or Domitian.

We had fondly hoped a mild philosophy was

* Mr. Holt, a printer, at Newark, is now imprisoned in Newgate for two years, for reprinting verbatim, An Address to the People on Reform, which was sanctioned for certain, and probably written by the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt.

about to diffuse over the globe, the triumph of liberty and peace. But, alas! these hopes are fled. The continent presents little but one wide picture of desolation, misery, and crimes: *on the earth distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

That the seeds of public convulsion are sown in every country of Europe (our own not excepted) it were vain to deny; seeds which without the wisest precautions, and the most conciliating councils, will break out, it is to be feared, in the overthrow of all governments. How this catastrophe may be averted, or how, should that be impossible, its evils may be mitigated and diminished, demands the deepest consideration of every European statesman. The ordinary routine of ministerial chicanery is quite unequal to the task. A philosophic comprehension of mind, which, leaving the beaten road of politics, shall adapt itself to new situations, and profit by the vicissitudes of opinion, equally removed from an attachment to antiquated forms, and useless innovations, capable of rising above the emergency of the moment, to the most remote consequences of a transaction; combining the past, the present, and the future, and knowing how to defend with firmness, or concede with dignity; these are the qualities which the situation of Europe renders indispensable. It would be a mockery of our present ministry to ask whether *they* possess those qualities.

With respect to the following Apology for the Freedom of the Press, the author begs leave to claim the reader's indulgence to its numerous imperfections, and hopes he will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, it is an eulogium on a *dead friend.*

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

THE accidental detention of the following pamphlet in the press longer than was expected, gave me an opportunity before it was published, of seeing Bishop Horsley's Sermon, preached before the House of Lords, on the 30th of January, and as its contents are relevant to my subject, a few remarks upon it may not be improper. His Lordship sets out with a severe censure of that *freedom of dispute*, on matters of *such high importance as the origin of government, and the authority of sovereigns*, in which he laments it has been the *folly of this country for several years past* to indulge. If his Lordship has not inquired into those subjects himself, he can with little propriety pretend to decide in so imperious and peremptory a manner; unless it be a privilege of his office to dogmatise without examination, or he has discovered some nearer road to truth than that of reasoning and argument. It seems a favourite point with a certain description of men, to stop the progress of inquiry, and throw mankind back into the darkness of the middle ages, from a persuasion,

that ignorance will augment their power, as objects look largest in a mist. There is, in reality, no other foundation for that alarm which the Bishop expresses. Whatever is not comprehended under revelation, falls under the inspection of reason; and since from the whole course of providence, it is evident, that all political events, and all the revolutions of government, are effected by the instrumentality of men, there is no room for supposing them too sacred to be submitted to the human faculties. The more minds there are employed in tracing their principles and effects, the greater probability will there be of the science of civil policy, as well as every other, attaining to perfection.

Bishop Horsley, determined to preserve the character of an original, presents us with a new set of political principles, and endeavours to place the exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance upon a new foundation. By a curious distinction between the *ground* of authority and of obedience, he rests the former on human compact, the latter on divine obligation. *It is easy to understand,* he says, *that the principle of the private citizen's submission must be quite a distinct thing from the principle of the sovereign's public title. And for this plain reason: The principle of submission, to bind the conscience of every individual, must be something universally known.* He then proceeds to inform us, that the kingly title in England is founded on the act of settlement; but

that as thousands and tens of thousands of the people have never heard of that act, the principle which compels their allegiance, must be something distinct from it, with which they may all be acquainted. In this reasoning, he evidently confounds the obligation of an *individual* to submit to the existing authority, with that of the community collectively considered. For *any particular number* of persons to set themselves by force to oppose the established practice of a state, is a plain violation of the laws of morality, as it would be productive of the utmost disorder; and no government could stand, were it permitted to individuals to counteract the general will, of which, in ordinary cases, legal usages are the interpreter. In the worst state of political society, if a people have not sufficient wisdom or courage to correct its evils and assert their liberty, the attempt of individuals to *force* improvements upon them, is a presumption which merits the severest punishment. Social order would be inevitably dissolved, if every man declined a practical acquiescence in that political regulation which he did not personally approve. The duty of submission is, in this light, founded on principles which hold under every government, and are plain and obvious. But the principle which attaches a people to their allegiance, collectively considered, must exactly coincide with the title to authority; as must be evident from the very meaning of the term authority, which, as distinguished from force, signifies a right to demand obedience. Authority

and obedience are correlative terms, and consequently in all respects correspond, and are commensurate with each other.

The divine right, his Lordship says, *of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience, is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereign of this country. It is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons. The denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God.* To invest any human power with these high epithets, is ridiculous at least, if not impious. The right of a prince to the obedience of his subjects, wherever it exists, may be called divine, because we know the Divine Being is the patron of justice and order; but in that sense the authority of a petty constable is equally divine; nor can the term be applied with any greater propriety to supreme than to subordinate magistrates. As to "*submission being among the general rules which proceed from the will of God, and have been impressed upon the conscience of every man by the original constitution of the world,*" nothing more is comprehended under this pomp of words, than that submission is, for the most part, a duty—a sublime and interesting discovery! The minds of princes are seldom of the firmest texture; and they who fill their heads with the magnificent chimera of divine right, prepare a victim, where they intend a God. Some species of government is essential to the well-being of mankind; submission to some species of government is consequently

a duty; but what kind of government shall be appointed, and to what limits submission shall extend, are mere human questions, to be adjusted by mere human reason and contrivance.

As the natural consequence of divine right, his Lordship proceeds to inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, in the most unqualified terms; assuming it as a principle to be acted upon under governments the most oppressive, in which he endeavours to shelter himself under the authority of Paul. The apostolic exhortation, as addressed to a few individuals, and adapted to the local circumstances of christians at that period, admits an easy solution; but to imagine it prescribes the duty of the Roman empire, and is intended to subject millions to the capricious tyranny of one man, is a reflection as well on the character of Paul, as on christianity itself.

On principles of reason, the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God, is to consider its influence on the happiness of society; so that, in this view, the question of passive obedience is reduced to a simple issue: Is it best for the human race that every tyrant and usurper be submitted to without check or control? It ought likewise to be remembered that if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that to whatever excesses of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to

general good, we may fairly presume it concurs with the will of the Deity; but if it appear pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, it must disclaim such support. From the known perfection of God, we conclude he wills the happiness of mankind; and that though he condescends not to interpose miraculously, that kind of civil polity is most pleasing in his eye, which is productive of the greatest felicity.

On a comparison of free with arbitrary governments, we perceive the former are distinguished from the latter, by imparting a much greater share of happiness to those who live under them; and this in a manner too uniform to be imputed to chance or secret causes. He who wills the end, must will the means which ascertain it. His Lordship endeavours to diminish the dread of despotic government, by observing, that in its worst state, it is attended with more good than ill, and that the *end of government under all its abuses is generally answered by it.* Admitting this to be true, it is, at best, but a consolation proper to be applied where there is no remedy, and affords no reason why we should not mitigate political as well as other evils, when it lies in our power. We endeavour to correct the diseases of the eye, or of any other organ, though the malady be not such as renders it useless.

The doctrine of passive obedience is so repugnant to the genuine feelings of human nature, that it can never be completely acted on: a secret dread

that popular vengeance will awake, and nature assert her rights, imposes a restraint, which the most determined despotism is not able to shake off. The rude reason of the multitude may be perplexed, but the sentiments of the heart are not easily perverted.

In adjusting the different parts of his theory, the learned Bishop appears a good deal embarrassed. *It will be readily admitted,* he says, (p. 9.) *that of all sovereigns, none reign by so fair and just a title, as those who derive their claim from some such public act (as the act of settlement) of the nation which they govern.* That there are different degrees in *justice,* and even in *divine right,* (which his Lordship declares all sovereigns possess,) is a very singular idea. Common minds would be ready to imagine, however various the modes of *injustice* may be, *justice* were a thing absolute and invariable, nor would they conceive, how *a divine right, a right the denial of which is high treason against the authority of God,* can be increased by the act of a nation. But this is not all. It is no just inference (he tells us) that the obligation upon the private citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised, arises wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. But if the sovereign derives his claim from this act of the nation, how comes it that the obligation of the people to submit to his claim, does not spring from the same act? Because *in all these cases,* he

affirms, *the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs to advance the new sovereign to his station.* In the hand of the Supreme Being, the whole agency of men may be considered as an *instrument;* but to make it appear that the right of dominion is independent of the people, men must be shewn to be instruments in political affairs, in a more absolute sense than ordinary. A divine interposition of a more immediate kind, must be shewn, or the mere consideration of God's being the original source of all power, will be a weak reason for absolute submission. Anarchy may have *power* as well as despotism, and is equally a link in the great chain of causes and effects.

It is not a little extraordinary, that Bishop Horsley, the apologist of tyranny, the patron of passive obedience, should affect to admire the British constitution, whose freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not say the Barons at Runnemede acted on his maxims, in extorting the Magna Charta from King John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry the Third. If he approves of their conduct, he gives up his cause, and is compelled, at least, to confess the principles of passive obedience were not true at that time; if he disapproves of their conduct, he must, to be consistent, reprobate the restraints which it imposed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his Lordship pretends to applaud,

were effected by resistance; the freedom of the British constitution flowed from a departure from passive obedience, and was therefore stained with high treason *against the authority of God.* To these conclusions he must inevitably come, unless he can point out something peculiar to the spot of Runnemede, or to the reign of King John, which confines the exception, to the general doctrine of submission, to that particular time and place. With whatever colours the advocates of passive obedience may varnish their theories, they must of necessity be enemies to the British constitution. Its spirit they detest; its corruptions they cherish; and if at present they affect a zeal for its preservation, it is only because they despair of any form of government being erected in its stead, which will give equal permanence to abuses. Afraid to destroy it at once, they take a malignant pleasure in seeing it waste by degrees under the pressure of internal malady.

Whatever bears the semblance of *reasoning*, in Bishop Horsley's discourse, will be found, I trust, to have received a satisfactory answer; but to animadvert with a becoming severity on the temper it displays is a less easy task. To render him the justice he deserves in that respect, would demand all the fierceness of his character.

We owe him an acknowledgment for the frankness with which he avows his decided preference of the clergy of France to dissenters in England;—a sentiment we have often suspected, but have

seldom had the satisfaction of seeing openly professed before.

None, he asserts, *at this season, are more entitled to our offices of love, than those with whom the difference is wide in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites; those venerable exiles, the prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France.* Far be it from me to intercept the compassion of the humane from the unhappy of any nation, tongue, or people; but the extreme tenderness he professes for the fallen church of France, is well contrasted by his malignity towards dissenters. Bishop Horsley is a man of sense: and though doctrine, discipline, and external rites, comprehend the whole of christianity, his tender, sympathetic heart is superior to prejudice, and never fails to recognize, in a persecutor, a friend and a brother.—Admirable consistency in a Protestant Bishop, to lament over the fall of that antichrist whose overthrow is represented by unerring inspiration, as an event the most splendid and happy! It is a shrewd presumption against the utility of religious establishments, that they too often become seats of intolerance, instigators to persecution, nurseries of Bonners and of Horsleys.

His Lordship closes his invective against dissenters, and Dr. Priestley in particular, by presenting a prayer in the spirit of an indictment. We are happy to hear of his Lordship's prayers, and are obliged to him for remembering us in them; but should be more sanguine in our

expectation of benefit, if we were not informed, the prayers of the *righteous* only avail much. *Miserable men,* he tells us, we *are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* With respect to the first, we must have plenty of that article, since he has distilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only because they are not within the reach of his mighty malice.

It is time to turn from this disgusting picture of sanctimonious hypocrisy and priestly insolence, to address a word to the reader on the following pamphlet. The political sentiments of Dr. Horsley are in truth of too little consequence in themselves, to engage a moment's curiosity, and deserve attention only as they indicate the spirit of the times. The freedom with which I have pointed out the abuses of government, will be little relished by the pusillanimous and the interested, but is, I am certain, of that nature, which it is the duty of the people of England never to relinquish, or suffer to be impaired by any human force or contrivance. In the present crisis of things, the danger to liberty is extreme, and it is requisite to address a warning voice to the nation, that may disturb its slumbers, if it cannot heal its lethargy. When we look at the distraction and misery of a neighbouring country, we behold a scene that is enough to make the most hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution. Nothing but an obstinate adherence to abuses, can ever push the people of England to that fatal extremity. But if the state of things

continues to grow worse and worse, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and persecution, the confusion will probably be dreadful, the misery extreme, and the calamities that await us too great for human calculation.

What must be the guilt of those men, who can calmly contemplate the approach of anarchy or despotism, and rather choose to behold the ruin of their country, than resign the smallest pittance of private emolument and advantage! To reconcile the disaffected, to remove discontents, to allay animosities, and open a prospect of increasing happiness and freedom, is yet in our power. But if a contrary course be taken, the sun of Great Britain is set for ever, her glory departed, and her history added to the catalogue of the mighty empires which exhibit the instability of all human grandeur, of empires which, after they rose by virtue to be the admiration of the world, sunk by corruption into obscurity and contempt. If any thing shall then remain of her boasted constitution, it will display magnificence in disorder, majestic desolation, Babylon in ruins, where, in the midst of broken arches and fallen columns, posterity will trace the *monuments* only of our ancient freedom!

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NEW EDITION.

As the following pamphlet has been long out of print, the reader will naturally expect some reason should be assigned for its republication. I might satisfy myself with safely affirming that I have no alternative left but either to publish it myself, or to permit it to be done by others, since the copyright has long since expired; and I have been under the necessity of claiming as a favour what I could not insist upon as a right.

In addition to this, a most erroneous inference has been drawn from my suffering it to fall into neglect. It has been often insinuated, that my political principles have undergone a revolution, and that I have renounced the opinions which it was the object of this pamphlet to establish. I must beg leave, however, to assert, that fashionable as such changes have been, and sanctioned by many conspicuous examples, I am not ambitious of the honour attached to this species of conversion, from a conviction that he who has once been the advocate of freedom and of reform, will

find it much easier to change his conduct than his principles—to worship the golden image, than to believe in the divinity of the idol. A reluctance to appear as a political writer, an opinion, whether well or ill founded, that the christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its energy and sanctity by embarking on the stormy element of political debate, were the motives that determined me, and which, had I not already engaged, would probably have effectually deterred me from writing upon politics. These scruples have given way to feelings still stronger, to my extreme aversion to be classed with political apostates, and to the suspicion of being deterred from the honest avowal of my sentiments on subjects of great moment, by hopes and fears to which, through every period of my life, I have been a total stranger. The effect of increasing years has been to augment, if possible, my attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and to the cause of reform as inseparably combined with their preservation; and few things would give me more uneasiness than to have it supposed I could ever become hostile or indifferent to these objects.

The alterations in the present edition are nearly all of minor importance; they chiefly consist of slight literary corrections, which very rarely affect the sense. It was not my wish or intention to impair the *identity* of the performance. There is in several parts an acrimony and vehemence in the language, which the candid reader will put to the

account of juvenile ardour; and which, should it be deemed excessive, he will perceive could not be corrected, without producing a new composition. One passage in the preface, delineating the character of the late Bishop Horsley, is omitted. On mature reflection, it appeared to the writer, not quite consistent either with the spirit of christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius. For the severity with which he has treated the political character of Mr. Pitt, he is not disposed to apologize, because he feels the fullest conviction that the policy, foreign and domestic, of that celebrated statesman, has inflicted a more incurable wound on the constitution, and entailed more permanent and irreparable calamities on the nation, than that of any other minister in the annals of British history. A simple reflection will be sufficient to evince the unparalleled magnitude of his apostasy, which is, that the memory of the *Son* of Lord Chatham, the vehement opposer of the American War, the champion of Reform, and the idol of the people, has become the rallying point of toryism, the type and symbol of whatever is most illiberal in principle, and intolerant in practice.

1821.

AN APOLOGY.

SECTION I.

On the Right of Public Discussion.

SOLON, the celebrated legislator of Athens, we are told, enacted a law for the capital punishment of every citizen who should continue neuter when parties ran high in that republic. He considered, it should seem, the declining to take a decided part on great and critical occasions, an indication of such a culpable indifference to the interests of the commonwealth, as could be expiated only by death. While we blame the rigour of this law, we must confess the principle, on which it was founded, is just and solid. In a political contest, relating to particular men or measures, a well-wisher to his country may be permitted to remain silent; but when the great interests of a nation are at stake, it becomes every man to act with firmness and vigour. I consider the present as a season of this nature, and shall therefore make no apology for laying before the public the reflections it has suggested.

The most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy, is the liberty of discussing every subject which can fall within the compass of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flourish; but should it be lost or impaired, its principles will neither be well understood nor long retained. To render the magistrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the suppression of opinions, shews an inattention to the nature and design of political society. When a nation forms a government, it is not wisdom but *power* which they place in the hand of the magistrate; from whence it follows, his concern is only with those objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account the administration of justice, the protection of property, and the defence of every member of the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for these may all be accomplished by *power;* but an attempt to distinguish truth from error, and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd. To comprehend the reasons on which the right of public discussion is founded, it is requisite to remark the difference between *sentiment* and *conduct.* The *behaviour* of men in society will be influenced by motives drawn from the prospect of good and evil: here then is the proper department of government, as it is capable of applying that good and evil by which actions are determined. Truth, on the contrary, is quite of a

different nature, being supported only by *evidence*, and, as when this is represented, we cannot withhold our assent, so where this is wanting, no power or authority can command it.

However some may affect to dread controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth, or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged in its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will, no doubt, be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability, and that superior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and every thing estimated at length according to its true value. Publications, besides, like every thing else that is human, are of a mixed nature, where truth is often blended with falsehood, and important hints suggested in the midst of much impertinent or pernicious matter; nor is there any way of separating the precious from the vile, but by tolerating the whole. Where the right of unlimited inquiry is exerted, the human faculties will be upon the advance; where it is relinquished they will be of necessity at a stand, and will probably decline.

If we have recourse to experience, that kind of enlarged experience in particular which history furnishes, we shall not be apt to entertain any violent alarm at the greatest liberty of discussion:

we shall there see that to this we are indebted for those improvements in arts and sciences, which have meliorated in so great a degree the condition of mankind. The middle ages, as they are called, the darkest period of which we have any particular accounts, were remarkable for two things; the extreme ignorance that prevailed, and an excessive veneration for received opinions; circumstances which, having been always united, operate on each other, it is plain, as cause and effect. The whole compass of science was in those times subject to restraint; every new opinion was looked upon as dangerous. To affirm the globe we inhabit to be round, was deemed heresy, and for asserting its motion, the immortal Galileo was confined in the prisons of the inquisition. Yet, it is remarkable, so little are the human faculties fitted for restraint, that its utmost rigour was never able to effect a thorough unanimity, or to preclude the most alarming discussions and controversies. For no sooner was one point settled than another was started; and as the articles on which men professed to differ were always extremely few and subtle, they came the more easily into contact, and their animosities were the more violent and concentrated. The shape of the tonsure, or manner in which a monk should shave his head, would then throw a whole kingdom into convulsions. In proportion as the world has become more enlightened, this unnatural policy of restraint has retired, the sciences it has entirely abandoned, and has taken its last

stand on religion and politics. The first of these was long considered of a nature so peculiarly sacred, that every attempt to alter it, or to impair the reverence for its received institutions, was regarded, under the name of heresy, as a crime of the first magnitude. Yet, dangerous as free inquiry may have been looked upon when extended to the principles of religion, there is no department where it was more necessary, or its interference more decidedly beneficial. By nobly daring to exert it when all the powers on earth were combined in its suppression, did Luther accomplish that reformation which drew forth primitive christianity, long hidden and concealed under a load of abuses, to the view of an awakened and astonished world. So great is the force of truth when it has once gained the attention, that all the arts and policy of the court of Rome, aided throughout every part of Europe by a veneration for antiquity, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the cruelty of despots, were fairly baffled and confounded by the opposition of a solitary monk. And had this principle of free inquiry been permitted in succeeding times to have full scope, christianity would at this period have been much better understood, and the animosity of sects considerably abated. Religious toleration has never been complete even in England; but having prevailed more here than perhaps in any other country, there is no place where the doctrines of religion have been set in so clear a light, or its truth so ably defended. The writings

of deists have contributed much to this end. Whoever will compare the late defences of christianity by Locke, Butler, or Clark, with those of the ancient apologists, will discern in the former far more precision and an abler method of reasoning than in the latter; which must be attributed chiefly to the superior spirit of inquiry by which modern times are distinguished. Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of discussion, religion, it is plain, hath been a gainer by it; its abuses corrected, and its divine authority settled on a firmer basis than ever.

Though I have taken the liberty of making these preliminary remarks on the influence of free inquiry in general, what I have more immediately in view is, to defend its exercise in relation to government. This being an institution purely human, one would imagine it were the proper province for freedom of discussion in its utmost extent. It is surely just that every one should have a right to examine those measures by which the happiness of all may be affected. The control of the public mind over the conduct of ministers, exerted through the medium of the press, has been regarded by the best writers, both in our own country and on the continent, as the main support of our liberties. While this remains we cannot be enslaved; when it is impaired or diminished, we shall soon cease to be free.

Under pretence of its being seditious to express any disapprobation of the *form* of our government,

the most alarming attempts are made to wrest the liberty of the press out of our hands. It is far from being my intention to set up a defence of republican principles, as I am persuaded whatever imperfections may attend the British constitution, it is competent to all the ends of government, and the best adapted of any to the *actual* situation of this kingdom. Yet I am convinced there is no crime in being a republican, and that while he obeys the laws, every man has a right to entertain what sentiments he pleases on our form of government, and to discuss this with the same freedom as any other topic. In proof of this, I shall beg the reader's attention to the following arguments.

1. We may apply to this point in particular, the observation that has been made on the influence of free inquiry in general, that it will issue in the firmer establishment of truth, and the overthrow of error. Every thing that is really excellent will bear examination, it will even invite it, and the more narrowly it is surveyed, to the more advantage it will appear. Is our constitution a good one? it will gain in our esteem by the severest inquiry. Is it bad? then its imperfections should be laid open and exposed. Is it, as is generally confessed, of a mixed nature, excellent in theory, but defective in its practice? freedom of discussion will be still requisite to point out the nature and source of its corruptions, and apply suitable remedies. If our constitution be that perfect model of excellence it is represented, it may boldly

appeal to the *reason* of an enlightened age, and need not rest on the support of an implicit faith.

2. Government is the creature of the people, and that which they have created they surely have a right to examine. The great Author of Nature having placed the right of dominion in no particular hands, hath left every point relating to it to be settled by the consent and approbation of mankind. In spite of the attempts of sophistry to conceal the origin of political right, it must inevitably rest at length on the acquiescence of the people. In the case of individuals it is extremely plain. If one man should overwhelm another with superior force, and after completely subduing him, under the name of government, transmit him in this condition to his heirs, every one would exclaim against such an act of injustice. But whether the object of his oppression be one, or a million, can make no difference in its nature, the idea of equity having no relation to that of numbers. Mr. Burke, with some other authors, are aware that an original right of dominion can only be explained by resolving it into the will of the people, yet contend that it becomes inalienable and independent by length of time and prescription. This fatal mistake appears to me to have arisen from confounding the right of dominion with that of private property. Possession for a certain time, it is true, vests in the latter a complete right, or there would be no end to vexatious claims; not to mention that it is of no consequence to society where property lies,

provided its regulations be clear, and its possession undisturbed. For the same reason it is of the essence of private property, to be held for the sole use of the owner, with liberty to employ it in what way he pleases, consistent with the safety of the community. But the right of dominion has none of the qualities that distinguish private possession. It is never indifferent to the community in whose hands it is lodged; nor is it intended, in any degree, for the benefit of those who conduct it. Being derived from the will of the people, explicit or implied, and existing solely for their use, it can no more become independent of that will, than water can rise above its source. But if we allow the people are the true origin of political power, it is absurd to require them to resign the right of discussing any question that can arise either upon its form or its measures, as this would put it for ever out of their power to revoke the trust which they have placed in the hands of their rulers.

3. If it be a crime for a subject of Great Britain to express his disapprobation of that form of government under which he lives, the same conduct must be condemned in the inhabitant of any other country. Perhaps it will be said, a distinction ought to be made on account of the superior excellence of the British constitution. This superiority I am not disposed to contest; yet cannot allow it to be a proper reply, as it takes for granted that which is supposed to be a matter of debate and inquiry. Let a government be ever so despotic, it

is a chance if those who share in the administration, are not loud in proclaiming its excellence. Go into Turkey, and the Pachas of the provinces will probably tell you, that the Turkish government is the most perfect in the world. If the excellency of a constitution, then, is assigned as the reason that none should be permitted to censure it, who, I ask, is to determine on this its excellence? If you reply, every man's own reason will determine, you concede the very point I am endeavouring to establish, the liberty of free inquiry: if you reply, our rulers, you admit a principle that equally applies to every government in the world, and will lend no more support to the British constitution than to that of Turkey or Algiers.

4. An inquiry respecting the comparative excellence of civil constitutions can be forbidden on no other pretence than that of its tending to sedition and anarchy. This plea, however, will have little weight with those who reflect, to how many ill purposes it has been already applied; and that when the example has been once introduced of suppressing opinions on account of their imagined ill tendency, it has seldom been confined within any safe or reasonable bounds. The doctrine of tendencies is extremely subtle and complicated. Whatever would diminish our veneration for the christian religion, or shake our belief in the being of a God, will be allowed to be of a very evil tendency; yet few, I imagine, who are acquainted with history, would wish to see the writings of

sceptists or deists suppressed by law; being persuaded it would be lodging a very dangerous power in the hands of the magistrate, and that truth is best supported by its own evidence. This dread of certain opinions, on account of their tendency, has been the copious spring of all those religious wars and persecutions, which are the disgrace and calamity of modern times.

Whatever danger may result from the freedom of political debate in some countries, no apprehension from that quarter need be entertained in our own. Free inquiry will never endanger the existence of a good government; scarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one. So uncertain is the issue of all revolutions, so turbulent and bloody the scenes that too often usher them in, the prejudice on the side of an ancient establishment so great, and the interests involved in its support so powerful, that, while it provides in any tolerable measure for the happiness of the people, it may defy all the efforts of its enemies.

The real danger to every free government is less from its enemies than from itself. Should it resist the most temperate reforms, and maintain its abuses with obstinacy, imputing complaint to faction, calumniating its friends, and smiling only on its flatterers; should it encourage informers, and hold out rewards to treachery, turning every man into a spy, and every neighbourhood into the seat of an inquisition, let it not hope it can long conceal its tyranny under the mask of freedom. These

are the avenues through which despotism must enter; these are the arts at which integrity sickens, and freedom turns pale.

SECTION II.

On Associations.

THE associations that have been formed in various parts of the kingdom, appear to me to have trodden very nearly in the steps I have been describing. Nothing could have justified this extraordinary mode of combination but the actual existence of those insurrections and plots, of which no traces have appeared, except in a speech from the throne. They merit a patent for insurrections who have discovered the art of conducting them with so much silence and secresy, that in the very places where they are affirmed to have happened, they have been heard of only by rebound from the cabinet. Happy had it been for the repose of unoffending multitudes, if the Associators had been able to put their mobs in possession of this important discovery before they set them in motion.

No sooner had the ministry spread an alarm through the kingdom against republicans and levellers, than an assembly of court-sycophants, with a placeman at their head, entered into what they termed an association, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, whence they issued accounts of their

proceedings. This was the primitive, the metropolitan association, which, with few exceptions, gave the tone to the succeeding, who did little more than copy its language and its spirit. As the popular ferment has, it may be hoped, by this time in some measure subsided, it may not be improper to endeavour to estimate the utility, and develope the principles of these societies.

1. The first particular that engages the attention, is their *singular* and *unprecedented* nature. The object is altogether new. The political societies that have been hitherto formed, never thought of interfering with the operations of law, but were content with giving, by their union, greater force and publicity to their sentiments. The diffusion of principles was their object, not the suppression; and, confiding in the justness of their cause, they challenged their enemies into the field of controversy. These societies, on the other hand, are combined with an express view to extinguish opinions, and to overwhelm freedom of inquiry by the terrors of criminal prosecution. They pretend not to enlighten the people by the spread of political knowledge, or to confute the errors of the system they wish to discountenance: they breathe only the language of menace: their element is indictment and prosecution, and their criminal justice formed on the model of Rhadamanthus, the poetic judge of Hell.

Castigatque, auditque, dolos subigitque fateri.

2. They are not only new in their nature and complexion, but are unsupported by any just pretence of expedience or necessity. The British constitution hath provided ample securities for its stability and permanence. The prerogatives of the crown, in all matters touching its dignity, are of a nature so high and weighty as may rather occasion alarm than need corroboration. The office of Attorney General is created for the very purpose of prosecuting sedition; and he has the peculiar privilege of filing a bill against offenders, in the King's name, without the intervention of a grand jury. If the public tranquillity be threatened, the King can embody the militia as well as station the military in the suspected places; and when to this is added the immense patronage and influence which flows from the disposal of seventeen millions a year, it must be evident the stability of the British government can never be shaken by the efforts of any minority whatever. It comprehends within itself all the resources of defence, which the best civil polity ought to possess. The permanence of every government must depend, however, after all, upon opinion, a general persuasion of its excellence, which can never be increased by its assuming a vindictive and sanguinary aspect. While it is the object of the people's approbation it will be continued, and to support it much beyond that period, by mere force and terror, would be impossible were it just, and unjust were it possible. The law hath amply provided against *overt acts* of

sedition and disorder, and to suppress *mere opinions* by any other method than reason and argument, is the height of tyranny. Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more importance than the preservation of any constitution, that to infringe the former, under pretence of supporting the latter, is to sacrifice the means to the end.

3. In attempting to define the boundary which separates the liberty of the press from its licentiousness, these societies have undertaken a task which they are utterly unable to execute. The line that divides them is too nice and delicate to be perceived by every eye, or to be drawn by every rude and unskilful hand. When a public outrage against the laws is committed, the crime is felt in a moment; but to ascertain the qualities which compose a libel, and to apply with exactness the general idea to every instance and example which may occur, demand an effort of thought and reflection, little likely to be exerted by the great mass of mankind. Bewildered in a pursuit which they are incapable of conducting with propriety, taught to suspect treason and sedition in every page they read, and in every conversation they hear, the necessary effect of such an employment must be to perplex the understanding and degrade the heart. An admirable expedient for transforming a great and generous people into a contemptible race of spies and informers!

For private individuals to combine together at all with a view to quicken the vigour of criminal prosecution is suspicious at least, if not illegal; in a case where the liberty of the press is concerned, all such combinations are utterly improper. The faults and the excellencies of a book are often so blended, the motives of a writer so difficult to ascertain, and the mischiefs of servile restraint so alarming, that the criminality of a book should always be left to be determined by the particular circumstances of the case. As one would rather see many criminals escape, than the punishment of one innocent person, so it is infinitely better a multitude of errors should be propagated than one truth be suppressed.

If the suppression of Mr. Paine's pamphlet be the object of these societies, they are ridiculous in the extreme; for the circulation of his works ceased the moment they were declared a libel: if any other publication be intended, they are premature and impertinent, in presuming to anticipate the decision of the courts.

4. Admitting, however, the principle on which they are founded to be ever so just and proper, they are highly impolitic. All violence exerted towards opinions which falls short of *extermination*, serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument; when they are true, their punishment draws towards

them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure on the mind. The progress of reason is aided, in this case, by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion, and resentment, powerful auxiliaries.

When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious: as men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long, or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence. This seems like adding triumph to oppression, and insult to injury. The apparent tranquillity which may ensue, is delusive and ominous; it is that awful stillness which nature feels, while she is awaiting the discharge of the gathered tempest.

The professed object of these associations is to strengthen the hands of government: but there is one way in which it may strengthen its own hands most effectually; recommended by a very venerable authority, though one from which it hath taken but few lessons. "He that hath *clean hands*," saith a sage adviser, "shall grow stronger and stronger." If the government wishes to become more vigorous, let it first become more pure, lest an addition to its strength should only increase its capacity for mischief.

There is a characteristic feature attending these associations, which is sufficient to acquaint us with their real origin and spirit, that is the silence, almost total, which they maintain respecting political abuses. Had they been intended, as their title imports, merely to furnish an antidote to the spread of republican schemes and doctrines, they would have loudly asserted the necessity of reform, as a conciliatory principle, a centre of union, in which the virtuous of all descriptions might have concurred. But this, however conducive to the good of the people, would have defeated their whole project, which consisted in availing themselves of an alarm which they had artfully prepared, in order to withdraw the public attention from real grievances to imaginary dangers. The Hercules of reform had penetrated the Augean stable of abuses; the fabric of corruption, hitherto deemed sacred, began to totter, and its upholders were apprehensive their iniquity was almost full. In this perplexity they embraced an occasion afforded them by the spread of certain bold speculations—(speculations which owed their success to the corruptions of government) to diffuse a panic, and to drown the justest complaints in unmeaning clamour. The plan of associating, thus commencing in corruption, and propagated by imitation and by fear, had for its *pretext* the fear of republicanism; for its *object* the perpetuity of abuses. Associations in this light may be considered as mirrors placed to advantage for

reflecting the finesses and tricks of the ministry. At present they are playing into each other's hands, and no doubt find great entertainment in deceiving the nation. But let them beware lest it should be found, after all, none are so much duped as themselves. Wisdom and truth, the offspring of the sky, are immortal; but cunning and deception, the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment, must pass away.

The candour and sincerity of these associators is of a piece with their other virtues; for while they profess to be combined in order to prevent riots and insurrections, attempted to be raised by republicans and levellers, they can neither point out the persons to whom that description applies, nor mention a single riot that was not fomented by their principles, and engaged on their side. There have been three riots in England of late on a political account; one at Birmingham, one at Manchester, and one at Cambridge; each of which has been levelled against dissenters and friends of reform.*

* The conduct of an honourable member of the House of Commons, respecting the last of these, was extremely illiberal. He informed the house, that the riot at Cambridge was nothing more than that the mob compelled Mr. Musgrave, one of his constituents, who had been heard to speak seditious words, to sing God save the King—a statement in which he was utterly mistaken. Mr. Musgrave, with whom I have the pleasure of being well acquainted, was neither guilty of uttering seditious discourse, nor did he, I am certain, comply with the requisition. His whole crime consists in the love of his country, and a zeal for parliamentary reform. It would be happy for this nation, if a portion only, of the integrity and disinterested virtue which adorn his character, could be infused into our great men.

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The Crown and Anchor association, as it was first in order of time, seems also determined, by pushing to a greater length the maxims of arbitrary power, to maintain its pre-eminence in every other respect. The divine right of monarchy, the sacred anointing of kings, passive obedience and non-resistance, are the hemlock and night-shade which these physicians have prescribed for the health of the nation; and are yet but a specimen of a more fertile crop which they have promised out of the hot-bed of their depravity. The opinions which they have associated to suppress, are contained, they tell us, in the terms liberty and equality; after which they proceed to a dull harangue on the mischiefs that must flow from equalizing property. All mankind, they gravely tell us, are not equal in virtue, as if that were not sufficiently evident from the existence of their society. The notion of equality in property, was never seriously cherished in the mind of any man, unless for the purpose of calumny: and the *term* transplanted from a neighbouring country, never intended *there* any thing more than *equality of rights*—as opposed to feudal oppression and hereditary distinctions. An equality of rights may consist with the greatest inequality between the things to which those rights extend. It belongs to the very nature of *property*, for the owner to have a full and complete right to that which he possesses, and consequently for all properties to have *equal* rights; but who is so ridiculous as to infer from thence, that the *posses-*

sions themselves are equal? A more alarming idea cannot be spread among the people, than that there is a large party ready to abet them in any enterprise of depredation and plunder. As all men do not know that the element of the associators is calumny, they are really in danger for a while of being believed, and must thank themselves if they should realize the plan of equality their own malice has invented.

I am happy to find that Mr. Law, a very respectable gentleman, who had joined the Crown and Anchor society, has publicly withdrawn his name, disgusted with their conduct; by whom we are informed they receive anonymous letters, vilifying the characters of persons of the first eminence, and that they are in avowed alliance with the ministry for prosecutions, whom they intreat to order the *Solicitor-General to proceed on their suggestions.* When such a society declares *itself to be unconnected with any political party,* our respect for human nature impels us to believe it, and to hope their appearance may be considered as an era in the annals of corruption, which will transmit their names to posterity with the encomiums they deserve. With sycophants so base and venal, no argument or remonstrance can be expected to have any success. It is in vain to apply to reason when it is perverted and abused, to shame when it is extinguished, to a conscience which has ceased to admonish: I shall therefore leave them in the undisturbed possession of that true philosophical indifference which steels them

against the reproaches of their own hearts, and the contempt of all honest men.

All the associations, it is true, do not breathe the spirit which disgraces that of the Crown and Anchor. But they all concur in establishing a political test, on the first appearance of which the friends of liberty should make a stand. The opinions proposed may be innocent, but the precedent is fatal; and the moment subscription becomes the price of security, the rubicon is passed. Emboldened by the success of this expedient, its authors will venture on more vigorous measures: test will steal upon test, and the bounds of tolerated opinion will be continually narrowed, till we awake under the fangs of a relentless despotism.

Section III.

On a Reform of Parliament.

Whatever difference of opinion may take place in points of less importance, there is one in which the friends of freedom are entirely agreed, that is, the necessity of reform in the representation. The theory of the English constitution presents three independent powers; the King as executive head, with a negative in the legislature; an hereditary House of Peers; and an assembly of Commons, who are appointed to represent the nation at large. From this enumeration it is plain, that the people of England can have no liberty, that is, no share in forming the laws, but what they exert through

the medium of the last of those bodies; nor then, but in proportion to its independence of the other. The independence therefore of the House of Commons, is the column on which the whole fabric of our liberty rests. Representation may be considered as complete when it collects to a sufficient extent, and transmits with perfect fidelity the real sentiments of the people; but this it may fail of accomplishing through various causes. If its electors are but a handful of people, and of a peculiar order and description; if its duration is sufficient to enable it to imbibe the spirit of a corporation; if its integrity be corrupted by treasury influence, or warped by the prospect of places and pensions; it may, by these means, not only fail of the end of its appointment, but fall into such an entire dependence on the executive branch, as to become a most dangerous instrument of arbitrary power. The usurpation of the emperors at Rome would not have been safe, unless it had concealed itself behind the formalities of a senate.

The confused and inadequate state of our representation, at present, is too obvious to escape the attention of the most careless observer. While, through the fluctuation of human affairs, many towns of ancient note have fallen into decay, and the increase of commerce has raised obscure hamlets to splendour and distinction, the state of representation standing still amidst these vast changes, points back to an order of things which no longer subsists. The opulent towns of Birming-

ham, Manchester, and Leeds, send no members to parliament; the decayed boroughs of Cornwall appoint a multitude of representatives. Old Sarum sends two members, though there are not more than one or two families that reside in it. The disproportion between those who vote for representatives and the people at large is so great, that the majority of our House of Commons is chosen by less than eight thousand, in a kingdom consisting of as many millions. Mr. Burgh, in his excellent political disquisitions, has made a very laborious calculation on this head, from which it appears, that the affairs of this great empire are decided by the suffrages of between five and six thousand electors; so that our representation, instead of being co-extended with the people, fails of this in a proportion that is truly enormous. The qualifications, moreover, that confer the right of election, are capricious and irregular. In some places it belongs to the corporation, or to those whom they think proper to make free; in some to every housekeeper; in others it is attached to a particular estate, whose proprietor is absolute lord of the borough, of which he makes his advantage, by representing it himself, or disposing of it to the best bidder. In counties the right of election is annexed only to one kind of property, that of freehold; the proprietor of copyhold land being entirely deprived of it, though his political situation is precisely the same.*

* Many of these extraordinary anomalies, so long acknowledged,

The consequence of this perplexity in the qualifications of electors is often a tedious scrutiny and examination before a committee of the House of Commons, prolonged to such a length, that there is no time when there are not some boroughs entirely unrepresented. These gross defects in our representation have struck all sensible men very forcibly; even Dr. Paley, a courtly writer in the main, declares, the bulk of the inhabitants of this country have little more concern in the appointment of parliament, than the subjects of the Grand Seignior at Constantinople.

On the propriety of the several plans which have been proposed to remedy these evils, it is not for me to decide; I shall choose rather to point out two general principles which ought, in my opinion, to pervade every plan of parliamentary reform; the first of which respects the mode of election, the second the independence of the elected. In order to give the people a true representation, let its basis be enlarged, and the duration of parliaments shortened. The first of these improvements would diminish bribery and corruption, lessen the violence and tumult of elections, and secure to the people a real and unequivocal organ for the expression of their sentiments.

Were every householder in town and country permitted to vote, the number of electors would be

and their baneful effects so often lamented, are corrected and removed by the "Reform Bill," which, with the King's concurrence, was brought into parliament under the administration of Earl Grey, and received the Royal assent June 7th, 1832.—Ed.

so great, that as no art or industry would be able to bias their minds, so no sums of money would be sufficient to win their suffrages. The plan which the Duke of Richmond recommended was, if I mistake not, still more comprehensive, including all that were of age, except menial servants. By this means, the different passions and prejudices of men would check each other, the predominance of any particular or local interest be kept down, and from the whole there would result that *general impression,* which would convey with precision the unbiassed sense of the people.

But besides this, another great improvement, in my opinion, would be, to shorten the duration of parliament, by bringing it back to one year. The *Michel Gemote,* or great council of the kingdom, was appointed to meet under Alfred twice a year, and by divers ancient statutes after the conquest, the king was bound to summon a parliament every year, or oftener, if need be; when, to remedy the looseness of this latter phrase, by the 16th of Charles the Second it was enacted, the holding of parliaments should not be intermitted above three years at most; and in the first of King William, it is declared as one of the rights of the people, that for redress of all grievances, and preserving the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently; which was again reduced to a certainty by another statute, which enacts, that a new parliament shall be called within three years after the termination of the former. To this term did they continue

limited till the reign of George the First; when, after the rebellion of 1715, the septennial act was passed, under the pretence of diminishing the expense of elections, and preserving the kingdom against the designs of the Pretender. A noble Lord* observed, on that occasion, he was at an utter loss to describe the nature of this prolonged parliament, unless he were allowed to borrow a phrase from the Athanasian Creed; for it was "neither created, nor begotten, but proceeding." Without disputing the upright intentions of the authors of this act, it is plain, they might on the same principle have voted themselves perpetual, and their conduct will ever remain a monument of that short-sightedness in politics, which, in providing for the pressure of the moment, puts to hazard the liberty and happiness of future times. It is intolerable, that in so large a space of a man's life as seven years, he should never be able to correct the error he may have committed in the choice of a representative, but be compelled to see him every year dipping deeper into corruption; a helpless spectator of the contempt of his interests, and the ruin of his country. During the present period of parliaments a nation may sustain the greatest possible changes; may descend by a succession of ill counsels, from the highest pinnacle of its fortunes to the lowest point of depression; its treasure exhausted, its credit sunk, and its weight almost completely annihilated in the scale

* The Earl of Peterborough.

of empire. Ruin and felicity are seldom dispensed by the same hand, nor is it likely any succour in calamity should flow from the wisdom and virtue of those, by whose folly and wickedness it was inflicted.

The union between a representative and his constituents ought to be strict and entire; but the septennial act has rendered it little more than nominal. The duration of parliament sets its members at a distance from the people, begets a notion of independence, and gives the minister so much leisure to insinuate himself into their graces, that before the period is expired, they become very mild and complying. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, that "every man had his price;" a maxim on which he relied with so much security, that he declared he seldom troubled himself with the election of members, but rather chose to stay and buy them up when they came to market. A very interesting work, lately published, entitled, "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," unfolds some parts of this mystery of iniquity, which the reader will probably think equally new and surprising. There is a regular office, it seems, that of manager of the House of Commons, which generally devolves on one of the secretaries of state, and consists in securing, at all events, a majority in parliament by a judicious application of promises and bribes. The sums disbursed by this honourable office are involved under the head of Secret Service Money; and so delicate is this employment of manager of

the House of Commons considered, that we have an account in the above-mentioned treatise, of a new arrangement of ministry, which failed for no other reason than that the different parties could not agree on the proper person to fill it.*

This secret influence which prevails, must be allowed to be extremely disgraceful; nor can it ever be effectually remedied, but by contracting the duration of parliaments.

If it be objected to annual parliaments, that by this means the tumult and riot attendant on elections will be oftener repeated; it ought to be remembered, that their duration is the chief source of these disorders. Render a seat in the House of Commons of less value, and you diminish at once the violence of the struggle. In America, the election of representatives takes place throughout that vast continent, in one day, with the greatest tranquillity.

* As I have taken my information on this head entirely on the authority of the work called "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," the reader may not be displeased with the following extract, from vol. ii. page 121. "The management of the House of Commons, as it is called, is a confidential department unknown to the constitution. In the public accounts it is immersed under the head of secret service money. It is usually given to the secretary of state when that post is filled by a commoner. The business of the department, is to distribute with *art* and *policy* amongst the members who have no ostensible places, sums of money, for their support during the session; besides contracts, lottery tickets, and other douceurs. It is no uncommon circumstance, at the end of a session, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thousand pounds for *his services*."

In a mixed constitution like ours, it is impossible to estimate the importance of an independent parliament; for as it is here our freedom consists, if this barrier to the encroachments of arbitrary power once fails, we can oppose no other. Should the king attempt to govern without a parliament, or should the upper house pretend to legislate independently of the lower, we should immediately take the alarm; but, if the House of Commons falls insensibly under the control of the other two branches of the legislature, our danger is greater, because our apprehensions are less. The forms of a free constitution surviving, when its spirit is extinct, would perpetuate slavery by rendering it more concealed and secure. On this account, I apprehend, did Montesquieu predict the loss of our freedom, from the legislative power becoming more corrupt than the executive; a crisis to which, if it has not arrived already, it is hastening apace. The immortal Locke, far from looking with the indifference too common on the abuses in our representation, considered all improper influence exerted in that quarter as threatening the very dissolution of government. *Thus,* says he, *to regulate candidates and electors, and new model the ways of election, what is it but to cut up the government by the roots, and poison the very fountain of public security?*

No enormity can subsist long without meeting with advocates; on which account we need not wonder, that the corruption of parliament has been

justified under the mild denomination of influence, though it must pain every virtuous mind to see the enlightened Paley engaged in its defence. If a member votes consistently with his convictions, his conduct, in that instance, has not been determined by influence; but if he votes otherwise, give it what gentle name you please, he forfeits his integrity; nor is it possible to mark the boundaries which should limit his compliance; for if he may deviate a little, to attain the See of Winchester, he may certainly step a little farther, to reach the dignity of Primate. How familiar must the practice of corruption have become, when a philosophical moralist, a minister of religion, of great talents and virtue, in the calm retirement of his study, does not hesitate to become its public apologist!

The necessity of a reform in the constitution of parliament, is in nothing more obvious than in the ascendancy of the aristocracy. This colossus bestrides both houses of parliament; legislates in one, and exerts a domineering influence over the other. It is humiliating, at the approach of an election, to see a whole county send a deputation to an Earl or Duke, and beg a representative as you would beg an alms. A multitude of laws have been framed, it is true, to prevent all interference of peers in elections; but they neither are nor can be effectual, while the House of Commons opens its doors to their sons and brothers. If our liberty depends on the balance and control of the

respective orders in the state, it must be extremely absurd to blend them together, by placing the father in one department of the legislature, and his family in the other.

Freedom is supposed, by some, to derive great security from the existence of a regular opposition; an expedient which is, in my opinion, both the offspring and the cherisher of faction. That a minister should be opposed, when his measures are destructive to his country, can admit of no doubt; that a systematic opposition should be maintained against any man, merely as a minister, without regard to the principles he may profess, or the measures he may propose, which is intended by a regular opposition, appears to me a most corrupt and unprincipled maxim. When a legislative assembly is thus thrown into parties, distinguished by no leading principle, however warm and animated their debates, it is plain, they display only a struggle for the emoluments of office. This the people discern, and in consequence, listen with very little attention to the representations of the minister on the one hand, or the minority on the other; being persuaded the only real difference between them is, that the one is anxious to gain what the other is anxious to keep. If a measure be good, it is of no importance to the nation from whom it proceeds; yet will it be esteemed by the opposition a point of honour not to let it pass, without throwing every obstruction in its way. If we listen to the minister for the time being, the

nation is always flourishing and happy; if we hearken to the opposition, it is a chance if it be not on the brink of destruction. In an assembly convened to deliberate on the affairs of a nation, how disgusting to hear the members perpetually talk of their connexions, and their resolution to act with a particular set of men, when, if they have happened by chance, to vote according to their convictions rather than their party, half their speeches are made up of apologies for a conduct so new and unexpected! When they see men united who agree in nothing but their hostility to the minister, the people fall at first into amazement and irresolution; till perceiving political debate is a mere scramble for profit and power, they endeavour to become as corrupt as their betters. It is not in that roar of faction which deafens the ear and sickens the heart, the still voice of Liberty is heard. She turns from the disgusting scene, and regards these struggles as the pangs and convulsions in which she is doomed to expire.

The æra of parties, flowing from the animation of freedom, is ever followed by an æra of faction, which marks its feebleness and decay. Parties are founded on *principle*, factions on *men*; under the first, the people are contending respecting the system that shall be pursued; under the second, they are candidates for servitude, and are only debating *whose livery* they shall wear. The purest times of the Roman republic were distin-

guished by violent dissensions; but they consisted in the jealousy of the several *orders* of the state among each other; on the ascendance of the patricians on the one side, and the plebeians on the other; a useful struggle, which maintained the balance and equipoise of the constitution. In the progress of corruption things took a turn; the permanent parties which sprang from the fixed principles of government were lost, and the citizens arranged themselves under the standard of particular leaders, being bandied into factions, under Marius or Sylla, Cæsar or Pompey; while the republic stood by without any interest in the dispute, a passive and helpless victim. The crisis of the fall of freedom, in different nations, with respect to the causes that produce it, is extremely uniform. After the manner of the ancient factions, we hear much in England of the Bedford party; the Rockingham party; the Portland party; when it would puzzle the wisest man to point out their political distinction. The useful jealousy of the separate orders is extinct, being all melted down and blended into one mass of corruption. The House of Commons looks with no jealousy on the House of Lords, nor the House of Lords on the House of Commons; the struggle in both is maintained by the ambition of powerful individuals and families, between whom the kingdom is thrown as the prize, and the moment they unite, they perpetuate its subjection and divide its spoils.

From a late instance, we see they quarrel only about the partition of the prey, but are unanimous in defending it. To the honour of Mr. Fox, and the band of illustrious patriots of which he is the leader, it will however be remembered, that they stood firm against a host of opponents, when, assailed by every species of calumny and invective, they had nothing to expect but the reproaches of the present, and the admiration of all future times. If any thing can rekindle the sparks of Freedom, it will be the flame of their eloquence; if any thing can reanimate her faded form, it will be the vigour of such minds.

The disordered state of our representation, it is acknowledged on all hands, must be remedied, some time or other; but, it is contended, that it would be improper, at present, on account of the political ferment that occupies the minds of men, and the progress of republican principles; a plausible objection, if delay can restore public tranquillity; but unless I am greatly mistaken, it will have just a contrary effect. It is hard to conceive, how the discontent that flows from the abuses of government can be allayed by their being perpetuated. If they are of such a nature that they can neither be palliated or denied, and are made the ground of invective against the whole of our constitution, are not they its best friends who wish to cut off this occasion of scandal and complaint? The *theory* of our constitution, we say, and justly, has been the admiration of the world;

the cavils of its enemies, then, derive their force entirely from the disagreement between that theory and its practice; nothing therefore remains, but to bring them as near as human affairs will admit to a perfect correspondence. This will cut up faction by the roots, and immediately distinguish those who wish to reform the constitution, from those who wish its subversion. Since the abuses are real, the longer they are continued the more they will be known; the discontented will be always gaining ground, and, though repulsed, will return to the charge with redoubled vigour and advantage. Let reform be considered as a chirurgical operation, if you please; but since the constitution must undergo it or die, it is best to submit before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the disease. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom, as an argument for delay, ought to teach us a contrary lesson. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been steadily resisted, and remedies been applied, as evils appeared, instead of piling them up as precedents, the disorders of government could never have arisen to that enormous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire necessity of building the whole fabric of political society afresh. It seems an infatuation in governments, that in tranquil times, they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints; till, public resentment kindling, they find, when it is too late, that, in their eagerness to retain every thing, they have lost all.

The pretences of Mr. Pitt and his friends for delaying this great business, are so utterly inconsistent, that it is too plain they are averse in reality to its ever taking place. When Mr. Pitt is reminded that he himself, at the beginning of his ministry, recommended parliamentary reform, he replies, it was necessary then, on account of the calamitous state of the nation, just emerged from an unsuccessful war, and filled with gloom and disquiet. But, unless the people are libelled, they now are still more discontented; with this difference, that their uneasiness formerly arose from events but remotely connected with unequal representation; but that this is now the chief ground of complaint. It is absurd, however, to rest the propriety of reform on any turn of public affairs. If it be not requisite to secure our freedom, it is vain and useless; but if it be a proper means of preserving that blessing, the nation will need it as much in peace as in war. When we wish to retain those habits, which we know it were best to relinquish, we are extremely ready to be soothed with momentary pretences for delay, though they appear, on reflection, to be drawn from quite opposite topics, and therefore to be equally applicable to all times and seasons.

A similar delusion is practised in the conduct of public affairs. If the people be tranquil and composed, and have not caught the passion of reform; it is impolitic, say the ministry, to disturb their minds, by agitating a question that lies at rest:

if they are awakened, and touched with a conviction of the abuse, we must wait, say they, till the ferment subsides, and not lessen our dignity by seeming to yield to popular clamour: if we are at peace, and commerce flourishes, it is concluded we cannot need any improvement, in circumstances so prosperous and happy: if, on the other hand, we are at war, and our affairs unfortunate, an amendment in the representation is dreaded, as it would seem an acknowledgment, that our calamities flowed from the ill conduct of parliament. Now, as the nation must always be in one or other of these situations, the conclusion is, the period of reform can never arrive at all.

This pretence for delay will appear the more extraordinary in the British ministry, from a comparison of the exploits they have performed, with the task they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt; for cementing a system of corruption, that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage; for carrying havoc and devastation to the remotest extremities of the globe; for accumulating taxes which famish the peasant and reward the parasite; for bandying the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public spirit; for the completion of these achievements they have suffered no opportunity to escape them. Elementary treatises on time mention various arrangements and divisions, but none have ever touched on the chronology of statesmen. These are a generation, who measure

their time not so much by the revolutions of the sun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two æras particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out; which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to the people, whose grievances they display in all the colours of variegated diction. But, the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradise, or mending the air of elysium.

Section IV.

On Theories, and the Rights of Man.

Among the many alarming symptoms of the present time, it is not the least, that there is a prevailing disposition to hold in contempt the *Theory* of liberty as false and visionary. For my own part, it is my determination never to be deterred by an obnoxious name, from an open avowal of any principles that appear useful and important. Were the ridicule now cast on the Rights of Man confined to a mere phrase, as the title of a book, it were of little consequence; but when *that* is

made the pretence for deriding the doctrine itself, it is matter of serious alarm.

To place the rights of man as the basis of lawful government, is not peculiar to Mr. Paine; but was done more than a century ago by men of no less eminence than Sidney and Locke. It is therefore extremely disingenuous to impute the system to Mr. Paine as its author. His structure may be false and erroneous, but the foundation was laid by other hands. That there are *natural rights*, or in other words, a certain liberty which men may exercise, independent of permission from society, can scarcely be doubted by those who comprehend the meaning of the terms. Every man must have a natural right to use his limbs in what manner he pleases, that is not injurious to another. In like manner he must have a right to worship God after the mode he thinks acceptable; or in other words, he ought not to be compelled to consult any thing but his own conscience. These are a specimen of those rights which may properly be termed *natural;* for, as philosophers speak of the primary qualities of matter, they cannot be increased or diminished. We cannot conceive the right of using our limbs to be created by society, or to be rendered more complete by any human agreement or compact.

But, there still remains a question, whether this natural liberty must not be considered as entirely relinquished, when we become members of society. It is pretended, that the moment we quit a state of *nature*, as we have given up the control of our

actions, in return for the superior advantages of law and government; we can never appeal again to any original principles, but must rest content with the advantages that are secured by the terms of the society. These are the views which distinguish the political writings of Mr. Burke, an author whose splendid and unequalled powers have given a vogue and fashion to certain tenets, which from any other pen would have appeared abject and contemptible. In the field of reason the encounter would not be difficult, but who can withstand the fascination and magic of his eloquence? The excursions of his genius are immense. His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every scene of the creation, and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a masterpiece of pathetic composition; so select are its images, so fraught with tenderness, and so rich with colours "dipt in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reasoner, but must resign all pretensions to taste and sensibility. His imagination is, in truth, only too prolific: a world of itself, where he dwells in the midst of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments, and starts, like Prospero, at the spectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated, rather than distinct; and the light he has let in on the British constitution, in particular, resembles the coloured effulgence of a painted medium, a kind of mimic twilight, solemn

and soothing to the senses, but better fitted for ornament than use.

A book has lately been published, under the title of "Happiness and Rights," written by Mr. Hey, a respectable member of the University of Cambridge, whose professed object is, with Mr. Burke, to overturn the doctrine of natural rights. The few remarks I may make upon it are less on account of any merit in the work itself, than on account of its author, who, being a member of considerable standing in the most liberal of our universities, may be presumed to speak the sentiments of that learned body. The chief difference between his theory and Mr. Burke's, seems to be the denial of the existence of any rights that can be denominated natural, which Mr. Burke only supposes *resigned* on the formation of political society. *The rights,* says Mr. Hey, *I can conjecture (for it is but a conjecture) to belong to me as a mere man, are so uncertain, and comparatively so unimportant, while the rights I feel myself possessed of in civil society are so great, so numerous, and many of them so well defined, that I am strongly inclined to consider society as creating or giving my rights, rather than recognizing and securing what I could have claimed if I had lived in an unconnected state.* (p. 137.)

As government implies restraint, it is plain a portion of our freedom is given up, by entering into it; the only question can then be, how far this resignation extends, whether to a part, or to the

whole? This point may, perhaps, be determined by the following reflections:—

1. The advantages that civil power can procure to a community, are *partial.* A small part, in comparison of the condition of man, can fall within its influence. Allowing it to be a rational institution, it must have that end in view which a reasonable man would propose by appointing it; nor can it imply any greater sacrifice than is strictly necessary to its attainment. But on what account is it requisite to unite in political society? Plainly, to guard against the injury of others; for, were there no injustice among mankind, no protection would be needed; no *public force* necessary; every man might be left without restraint or control. The attainment of all possible good, then, is *not* the purpose of laws, but to secure us from external injury and violence; and as the means must be proportioned to the end, it is absurd to suppose, that, by submitting to civil power, with a view to some *particular* benefits, we should be understood to hold all our advantages dependent upon that authority. Civil restraints imply nothing more than a surrender of our liberty in some points, in order to maintain it undisturbed in others of more importance. Thus, we give up the liberty by repelling force by force, in return for a more equal administration of justice than private resentment would permit. But, there are some rights which cannot with any propriety be yielded up to human authority, because they are perfectly

consistent with every benefit its appointment can procure. The free use of our faculties in distinguishing truth from falsehood, the exertion of corporeal powers without injury to others, the choice of a religion and worship, are branches of natural freedom which no government can justly alter or diminish, because their restraint cannot conduce to that security which is its proper object. Government, like every other contrivance, has a *specific* end; it implies the resignation of just as much liberty as is needful to attain it; whatever is demanded more, is superfluous, a species of tyranny, which ought to be corrected by withdrawing it. The relation of master and servant, of pupil and instructor, of the respective members of a family to their head, all include some restraint, some abridgment of natural liberty. But in these cases it is not pretended, that the surrender is total; and why should this be supposed to take place in political society, which is *one* of the relations of human life? this would be to render the foundation infinitely broader than the superstructure.

2. From the notion that political society precludes an appeal to natural rights, the greatest absurdities must ensue. If that idea be just, it is improper to say of any administration, that it is despotic or oppressive, unless it has receded from its first form and model. Civil power can never exceed its limits, until it deviates into a new track. For, if every portion of natural freedom be given up by yielding to civil authority, we can never

claim any other liberties than those precise ones which were ascertained in its first formation. The vassals of despotism may complain, perhaps, of the hardships which they suffer, but, unless it appear they are of *a new kind*, no injury is done them; for no right is violated. Rights are either natural or artificial; the first cannot be pleaded after they are relinquished, and the second cannot be impaired but by a departure from ancient precedents. If a man should be unfortunate enough to live under the dominion of a prince, who, like the monarchs of Persia, could murder his subjects at will, he may be unhappy, but cannot complain; for, on Mr. Hey's theory, he never had any rights but what were created by society, and on Mr. Burke's he has for ever relinquished them. The claims of *nature* being set aside, and the constitution of the government despotic from the beginning, his misery involves no injustice, and admits of no remedy. It requires little discernment to see that this theory rivets the chains of despotism, and shuts out from the political world the smallest glimpse of emancipation or improvement. Its language is, he that is a slave, let him be a slave still.

3. It is incumbent on Mr. Burke and his followers to ascertain the *time* when natural rights are relinquished. Mr. Hey is content with tracing their existence to society, while Mr. Burke, the more moderate of the two, admitting their foundation in nature, only contends that regular government absorbs and swallows them up, bestowing artificial

advantages in exchange. But, at what period, it may be inquired, shall we date this wonderful revolution in the social condition of man? If we say it was as early as the first dawn of society, natural liberty had never any existence at all, since there are no traces, even in tradition, of a period when men were utterly unconnected with each other. If we say this complete surrender took place with the first rudiments of law and government in every particular community, on what principle were subsequent improvements introduced? Mr. Burke is fond of resting our liberties on Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights; but he ought to remember, that, as they do not carry us to the commencement of our government, which was established ages before, our forefathers had long ago resigned their natural liberty. If those famous stipulations only recognized such privileges as were in force before, they have no claim to be considered as the foundations of our constitution; but, if they formed an *æra* in the annals of freedom, they must have been erected on the basis of those natural rights which Mr. Burke ridicules and explodes. When our ancestors made those demands, it is evident they did not suppose an appeal to the rights of nature precluded. Every step a civilized nation can take towards a more equal administration, is either an assertion of its natural liberty, or a criminal encroachment on just authority. The influence of government on the stock of natural rights, may be compared to that of a

manufactory on the rude produce; it adds nothing to its quantity, but only qualifies and fits it for use. Political arrangement is more or less perfect in proportion as it enables us to exert our natural liberty to the greatest advantage; if it is diverted to any other purpose, it is made the instrument of gratifying the passions of a few, or imposes greater restraint than its object prescribes; it degenerates into tyranny and oppression.

The greatest objection to these principles is their perspicuity, which makes them ill relished by those whose interest it is to hide the nature of government from vulgar eyes, and induce a persuasion, that it is a secret which can only be unfolded to the *initiated* under the conduct of Mr. Burke, the great *Hierophant* and revealer of the mysteries. A mystery and a trick are generally two sides of the same object, according as it is turned to the view of the beholder.

The doctrine of Mr. Locke, and his followers, is founded on the natural equality of mankind; for as no man can have any natural or inherent right to rule any more than another, it necessarily follows, that a claim to dominion, wherever it is lodged, must be ultimately referred back to the explicit or implied consent of the people. Whatever source of civil authority is assigned different from this, will be found to resolve itself into *mere force.* But as the natural equality of one generation is the same with that of another, the people have always the same right to new

model their government, and set aside their rulers. This right, like every other, may be exerted capriciously and absurdly; but no human power can have any pretensions to intercept its exercise. For civil rulers cannot be considered as having any claims, that are co-extended with those of the people, nor as forming a party separate from the nation. They are appointed by the community to *execute* its will, not to *oppose* it; to manage the *public*, not to pursue any *private* or *particular* interests. Are all the existing authorities in a state to lie then, it may be said, at the mercy of the populace, liable to be dissipated by the first breath of public discontent? By no means; they are to be respected and obeyed, as interpreters of the public will. Till they are set aside by the unequivocal voice of the people, they are a law to every member of the community. To resist them is rebellion; and for any particular set of men to attempt their subversion by force, is a heinous crime, as they represent and embody the collective majesty of the state. They are the exponents, to use the language of algebra, of the precise quantity of liberty the people have thought fit to legalize and secure. But though they are a law to every member of the society, separately considered, they cannot bind the society itself, or prevent it, when it shall think proper, from forming an entire new arrangement; a right that no compact can alienate or diminish, and which has been exerted as often as a free government has

been formed. On this account, in resolving the right of dominion into compact, Mr. Locke appears to me somewhat inconsistent, or he has expressed himself with less clearness and accuracy than was usual with that great philosopher. There must have been a previous right to insist on stipulations, in those who formed them; nor is there any reason why one race of men is not as competent to that purpose as another.

With the enemies of freedom, it is a usual artifice to represent the sovereignty of the people as a licence to anarchy and disorder. But the tracing up civil power to that source, will not diminish our obligation to obey; it only explains its reasons, and settles it on clear determinate principles. It turns blind submission into rational obedience, tempers the passion for liberty with the love of order, and places mankind in a happy medium, between the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and oppression on the other. It is the polar star that will conduct us safe over the ocean of political debate and speculation, the law of laws, the legislator of legislators.

To reply to all the objections that have been advanced against this doctrine, would be a useless task, and exhaust the patience of the reader; but there is one drawn from the idea of a majority, much insisted on by Mr. Burke, and Mr. Hey, of which the latter gentleman is so enamoured, that he has spread it out into a multitude of pages. They assert, that the theory of natural rights can

never be realised, because every member of the community cannot concur in the choice of a government, and the minority being compelled to yield to the decisions of the majority, are under tyrannical restraint. To this reasoning it is a sufficient answer, that, if a number of men act together at all, the necessity of being determined by the sense of the majority, in the last resort, is so obvious, that it is always implied. An exact concurrence of many particular wills, is impossible; and therefore, when each taken separately has precisely the same influence, there can be no hardship in suffering the result to remain at issue, till it is determined by the coincidence of the greater number. The idea of *natural liberty*, at least, is so little violated by this method of proceeding, that it is no more than what takes place every day in the smallest society, where the necessity of being determined by the voice of the majority is so plain, that it is scarcely ever reflected upon. The defenders of the rights of man mean not to contend for impossibilities. We never hear of a right to fly, or to make two and two five. If the majority of a nation approve its government, it is, in this respect, as free as the smallest association or club; any thing beyond which must be visionary and romantic.

The next objection Mr. Hey insists upon, is, if possible, still more frivolous, turning on the case of young persons during minority. He contends, that, as some of these have more sense than may

be found among common mechanics, and the lowest of the people, *natural right* demands their inclinations to be consulted in political arrangements. Were there any method of ascertaining exactly the degree of understanding possessed by young persons during their minority, so as to distinguish early intellects from the less mature, there would be some force in the objection; in the present case, the whole supposition is no more than one of those chimeras which this gentleman is ever fond of combating, with the same gravity, and to as little purpose, as Don Quixote his windmill.

The period of minority, it is true, varies in different countries, and is, perhaps, best determined every where by ancient custom and habit. An early maturity may confer on sixteen more sagacity than is sometimes found at sixty; but what then? A wise government, having for its object human nature at large, will be adapted, not to its accidental deviations, but to its usual aspects and appearances. For an answer to his argument against natural rights, drawn from the exclusion of women from political power, I beg leave to refer the author to the ingenious Miss Wolstencroft, the eloquent patroness of female claims; unless, perhaps, every other empire may appear mean in the estimation of those, who possess, with an uncontrolled authority, the empire of the heart.

"The situation," says Mr. Hey, (p. 137) "in

which any man finds himself placed, when he arrives at the power of reflecting, appears to be the consequence of a vast train of events, extending backwards, hundreds or thousands of years, for aught he can tell, and totally baffling all the attempts at comprehension by human faculties."

From hence he concludes, all inquiry into the rights of man should be forborne. What rights this Being (God) may have possibly intended that I might claim from beings like myself, if he had thought proper that I had lived amongst them in an *unconnected* state, that is to say, what are the rights of a mere *man*, appears a question involved in such obscurity, that I cannot trace even any indication of that Being having intended me to inquire into it."

If any thing be intended by these observations, it is, that we ought never to attempt to ameliorate our condition, till we are perfectly acquainted with its causes. But as the subjects of the worst government are, probably, as ignorant of the train of events for some thousands of years back, as those who enjoy the best, they are to rest contented, it seems, until they can clear up that obscurity, and inquire no farther.

It would seem strange to presume an inference good, from not knowing how we arrived at it. Yet this seems as reasonable as to suppose the political circumstances of a people fit and proper, on account of our inability to trace the causes that produced them. To know the source of an

evil, is only of consequence, as it may chance to conduct us to the remedy. But the whole paragraph I have quoted, betrays the utmost perplexity of thought; confounding the *civil condition* of individuals with the political institution of a society. The former will be infinitely various in the same community, arising from the different character, temper, and success of its members: the latter unites and pervades the whole, nor can, any abuses attach to it, but what may be displayed and remedied.

It is perfectly disingenuous in this author to represent his adversaries as desirous of committing the business of legislation indiscriminately to the meanest of mankind.* He well knows the wildest democratical writer contends for nothing more than popular government by *representation.* If the labouring part of the people are not competent to *choose* legislators, the English constitution is essentially wrong; especially in its present state, where the importance of each vote is enhanced by the paucity of the electors.

* "A man whose hands and ideas have been usefully confined for thirty or forty years to the labour and management of a farm, or the construction of a wall, or piece of cloth, does indeed, in one respect, appear superior to an infant three months old. The man could make a law of some sort or other; the infant could not. The man could, in any particular circumstances of a nation, say those words, We will go to war, or we will not go to war; the infant could not. But the difference between them is more in appearance than in any useful reality. The man is totally unqualified to judge what ought to be enacted for laws." Hey, p. 31.

After the many examples of misrepresentation which this author has furnished, his declamations on the levelling system cannot be matter of surprise. An equality of rights is perfectly consistent with the utmost disproportion between the objects to which they extend. A peasant may have the same right to the exertion of his faculties with a Newton; but this will not fill up the vast chasm that separates them.

The ministry will feel great obligations to Mr. Hey, for putting off the evil day of reform to a far distant period,—a period so remote, that they may hope, before it is completed, their names and their actions will be buried in friendly oblivion. He indulges a faint expectation, he tells us, that the practice of governments may be improved *in two or three thousand years.*

A smaller edition of this work has lately been published, considerably abridged, for the use of the poor, who, it may be feared, will be very little benefited by its perusal. Genius may dazzle, eloquence may persuade, reason may convince; but to render popular, cold and comfortless sophistry, unaided by those powers, is an hopeless attempt.

I have trespassed, I am afraid, too far on the patience of my readers, in attempting to expose the fallacies by which the followers of Mr. Burke perplex the understanding, and endeavour to hide in obscurity the true sources of political power. Were there indeed any impropriety in laying them open, the blame would not fall on the friends of

freedom, but on the provocation afforded by the extravagance and absurdity of its enemies. If princely power had never been raised to a level with the attributes of the divinity by Filmer, it had probably never been sunk as low as popular acquiescence by Locke. The confused mixture of liberty and oppression, which ran through the feudal system, prevented the theory of government from being closely inspected: particular rights were secured; but the relation of the people to their rulers was never explained on its just principles, till the transfer of superstition to civil power shocked the common sense of mankind, and awakened their inquiries. They drew aside the veil, and where they were taught to expect a mystery, they discerned a fraud. There is, however, no room to apprehend any evil from political investigation, that will not be greatly overbalanced by its advantages. For, besides that truth is always beneficial, tame submission to usurped power has hitherto been the malady of human nature. The dispersed situation of mankind, their indolence and inattention, and the opposition of their passions and interests, are circumstances which render it extremely difficult for them to combine in resisting tyranny with success. In the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!* The necessity of regular government, under some form or other, is so pressing, that the evil of anarchy is of short duration. Rapid, violent, destructive in its course, it is an

inundation which, fed by no constant spring, soon dries up and disappears. The misfortune on these occasions is, that the people, for want of understanding the principles of liberty, seldom reach the true source of their misery; but, after committing a thousand barbarities, only change their masters, when they should change their system.

Section V.

On Dissenters.

Of that foul torrent of insult and abuse, which it has lately been the lot of the friends of liberty to sustain, a larger portion hath fallen to the share of dissenters than any other description of men. Their sentiments have been misrepresented, their loyalty suspected, and their most illustrious characters held up to derision and contempt. The ashes of the dead have been as little spared as the merit of the living; and the same breath that has attempted to depreciate the talents and virtues of a Priestley, is employed to blacken the memory of a Price. The effusions of a distempered loyalty are mingled with execrations on that unfortunate sect; as if the attachment to the king were to be measured by the hatred to dissenters. Without any shadow of criminality, they are doomed to sustain perpetual insult and reproach; their repose disturbed, and their lives threatened and endangered. If dissent be, in truth, a crime of such

magnitude that it must not be tolerated, let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law, that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace. It is natural to inquire into the cause of this extreme virulence against a particular class of the community, who are distinguished from others only by embracing a different form and system of worship.

In the practice of the moral virtues, it will hardly be denied, that they are at least as exemplary as their neighbours; while, in the more immediate duties of religion, if there be any distinction, it lies in their carrying to a greater height, sentiments of seriousness and devotion. The nature of their *public conduct* will best appear from a rapid survey of some of those great political events in which it has had room to display itself; where, though our history has been ransacked to supply invective, it will be seen, their merits more than compensate for any errors they may have committed. Their zeal in opposing Charles I. has been an eternal theme of reproach; but it should be remembered, that when that resistance first took place, the parliament consisted for the most part of churchmen, and was fully justified in its opposition, by the arbitrary measures of the court. Had the pretensions of Charles been patiently acquiesced in, our government had long ago been despotic.

What medium might have been found between tame submission and open hostility, and whether

matters were not afterwards pushed to an extremity against the unfortunate monarch, it is not for me to determine, nor does it concern the vindication of dissenters. For long before the final catastrophe which issued in the king's death, the favourable intentions of parliament were overruled by the ascendancy of Cromwell; the parliament itself oppressed by his arms, and the influence both of churchmen and dissenters bent under military usurpation. The execution of Charles was the deed of a faction, condemned by the great body of the puritans as a criminal severity. But whatever blame they may be supposed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles, the merit of restoring monarchy in his son was all their own. The entire force of the empire was in their hands; Monk himself of their party; the parliament, the army, all puritans; yet were they disinterested enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reins into his hands, with no other stipulation than that of liberty of conscience, which he violated with a baseness and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them for the recovery of his power, consisted in depriving two thousand of their ministers, and involving the whole body in a persecution, by which not less than ten thousand are supposed to have perished in imprisonment and want. But their patriotism was not to be shaken by these injuries. When, towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign, the character of his successor inspired a

dread of the establishment of popery, to avert that evil they cheerfully acquiesced in an exclusion from all places of emolument and trust; an extraordinary instance of magnanimity. When James the Second began to display arbitrary views, dissenters were among the first to take the alarm, regarding with jealousy even an indulgence when it flowed from a dispensing power. The zeal with which they cooperated in bringing about the revolution, the ardour with which they have always espoused its principles, are too well known to need any proof, and can only be rendered more striking by a contrast with the conduct of the high church party. The latter maintained, in its utmost extent, the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; were incessantly engaged in intrigues to overturn the revolution; and affirmed the doctrine of divine right to be an ancient and indisputable tenet of the English Church. Whoever wishes to ascertain the existence of those arts, by which they embroiled the reign of King William, may see them displayed at large in Burnet's History of his own Times.

The attachment of dissenters to the house of Hanover was signalized in a manner too remarkable to be soon forgotten. In the rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, they ventured on a breach of the law, by raising and officering regiments out of their own body; for which the parliament were reduced to the awkward expedient of passing an act of indemnity. This short sketch of their political

conduct, as it is sufficient to establish their loyalty beyond suspicion, so may it well augment our surprise at the extreme obloquy and reproach with which they are treated. Mr. Hume, a competent judge, if ever there was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to dissenters, candidly confesses that to them we are indebted for the preservation of liberty.

The religious opinions of dissenters are so various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in asserting the rights of conscience against all human control and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at first with a disapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal superstition. Their total separation from the church did not take place for more than a century after; till, despairing of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan, and being moreover persecuted for their difference of sentiment, they were compelled at last, reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever, a sentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are least likely to disturb the peace of society; for they claim no other liberty than what they wish

the whole human race to possess, that of deciding on every question where conscience is concerned. It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendour. A disposition to impose their religion on others cannot be suspected in men, whose distinguishing religious tenet is the disavowal of all human authority.

Their opinion respecting establishments is founded upon reasons which appear to them weighty and solid. They have remarked, that in the three first and purest ages of religion, the church was a stranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid, christianity never flourished so much as while they were combined to suppress it; and that the protection of Constantine, though well intended, diminished its purity more than it added to its splendour.

The only pretence for uniting christianity with civil government, is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree, without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it has any power, operates on the *conscience* of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumults of worldly policy. Can it be imagined that a

dissenter, who believes in divine revelation, does not feel the same moral restraints, as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament! Human laws may debase christianity, but can never improve it; and, being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force.

Happy had it been, however, had civil establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But, when christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some particular system; and, as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his lending his sanction to the false as to the true. Splendour and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church: which are a strong inducement to its ministers to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent; and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between

church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer, that piety flourishes much more among dissenters, than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems wanting in any country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels, but a splendid establishment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate, both in discipline and doctrine, every error and abuse.

Turn a christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments, and passions, as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power, which they are the means

of supporting. To this alliance of christianity with civil power, it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which, left to itself, had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.

Among the evils attending the alliance of church and state, it is not the least that it begets a notion of their interests having some kind of inseparable, though mysterious connexion; so that they who are dissatisfied with the one, must be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinctured with this delusion, in which church and king are blended together with an arrogance that seems copied from Cardinal Wolsey's *Ego et rex meus,* I and my king; as if the establishment were of more consequence than the sovereign who represents the collective majesty of the state. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animosity of sects will subside for want of materials to inflame it; nor will any man suspect his neighbour for being of a different religion, more than for being of a different complexion from himself. The practice of toleration, it is true, has much abated the violence of those convulsions which, for more than a century from the beginning of the reformation, shook Europe to its base; but the source and spring of intolerance is by no means exhausted. The steam from that infernal pit will issue through the crevices, until they are filled up with the *ruins* of all human establishments.

The alliance between church and state is, in a *political point of view*, extremely suspicious, and much better fitted to the genius of an arbitrary than a free government. To the former it may yield a powerful support; to the latter it must ever prove dangerous. The spiritual submission it exacts, is unfavourable to mental vigour, and prepares the way for a servile acquiescence in the encroachments of civil authority. This is so correspondent with *facts*, that the epithet high church, when applied to politics, is familiarly used in our language to convey the notion of arbitrary maxims of government.

As far as submission to civil magistrates is a branch of moral virtue, christianity will, under every form, be sure to enforce it; for, among the various sects and parties into which its profession is divided, there subsists an entire agreement respecting the moral duties it prescribes. To select, therefore, and endow a *particular order* of clergy to teach the duties of submission is useless, as a mean to secure the peace of a society, though well fitted to produce a slavish subjection. Ministers of that description, considering themselves as allies of the state, yet having no civil department, will be disposed, on all occasions, to strike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any just and reasonable bounds. They will insensibly become an army of spiritual janizaries. Depending, as they every where must, upon the sovereign, his

prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better instruments be contrived for the accomplishment of arbitrary designs. Their compact and united form, composing a chain of various links which hangs suspended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying the impression that may soothe, inflame, or mislead the people.

These are the evils which, in my opinion, attach to civil establishments of christianity. They are, indeed, often mitigated by the virtue of their members; and among the English clergy in particular, as splendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced, as any which the annals of human nature can afford; but in all our reasonings concerning *men*, we must lay it down as a maxim, that the greater part are moulded by circumstances. If we wish to see the *true spirit* of an hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is usually termed the high church party.

While they had sufficient influence with the legislature, they impelled it to persecute; and now that a more enlightened spirit has brought that expedient into disgrace, they turn to the people, and endeavour to inflame their minds by the arts of calumny and detraction. When the dissenters applied for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, an alarm was spread of the church being in danger, and their claim was defeated. From the late opposition of the bishops to the repeal of the penal statutes, we learn that they have lost the

power rather than the inclination to persecute, or they would be happy to abolish the monuments of a spirit, they ceased to approve. The nonsense and absurdity comprised in that part of our laws would move laughter in a company of peasants; but nothing is thought mean or contemptible which is capable of being forged into a weapon of hostility against dissenters. To perpetuate laws which there is no intention to execute, is certainly the way to bring law into contempt; but the truth is, that unwilling to relinquish the right of persecution, though they have no immediate opportunity of exerting it, they retain these statutes as a body in reserve, ready to be brought into the field on the first occasion that shall offer.*

The prejudice entertained against us, is not the work of a day, but the accumulation of ages, flowing from the fixed antipathy of a numerous and powerful order of men, distributed through all the classes of society; nor is it easy to conceive to what a pitch popular resentment may be inflamed by artful management and contrivance. Our situation in this respect bears a near resemblance to that of the primitive christians, against whom, though in themselves the most inoffensive of mankind, the malice of the populace was directed, to a still

* This disgrace to the legislation of a great and free country has, at length, but not till more than a third part of a century had elapsed after the above reproach was penned, been finally removed, by an enactment for which the Dissenters are especially indebted to the able and zealous exertions of that noble example and advocate of all liberal principles, Lord John Russell.—Ed.

greater degree, by similar arts, and upon similar principles. The clamour of the fanatic rabble, the devout execration of dissenters, will remind the reader of ecclesiastical history of the excesses of pagan ferocity, when the people, instigated by their priests, were wont to exclaim, *Christianos ad leones.* There is the less hope of this animosity being allayed, from its having arisen from *permanent causes.* That christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the church is doomed to vanish before them. Under these circumstances, whatever portion of talents or of worth dissenters may possess, serves only to render them more hated, because more formidable. Had they merely revelled with the wanton, and drunk with the drunken; had they been clothed with curses, they might have been honoured and esteemed notwithstanding, as true sons of the church; but their dissent is a crime too indelible in the eyes of their enemies for any virtue to alleviate, or any merit to efface.

Till the test business was agitated, however, we were not aware of our labouring under such a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildness of the times, and conscious that every trace of

resentment was vanished from our own breasts, we fondly imagined that those of churchmen were equally replete with sentiments of generosity and candour. We accordingly ventured on a renewal of our claim as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far, before we were assailed with the bitterest reproaches. The innocent design of relieving ourselves from a disgraceful proscription, was construed by our enemies into an attack on the church and state. Their opposition was both more violent and more formidable than was expected. They let us see, that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of resentment and party spirit, like vestal fire, must never be extinguished in their temples. Calumnies continued to be propagated, till they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever memorable æra in the annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with astonishment and regret, the outrage sustained by philosophy in the most enlightened of countries, and in the first of her sons! When we hear such excesses as these justified and applauded, we seem to be falling back apace into the darkness of the middle ages.

The connexion between civil and religious liberty is too intimate to make it surprising, that they who are attached to the one, should be friendly to the other. The dissenters have accordingly seldom failed to lend their support to men, who seemed likely to restore the vigour of a sinking constitution. Parliamentary reform has

been cherished by them with an ardour equal to its importance. This part of their character inflames opposition still farther; and affords a pretext to their enemies for overwhelming the cause of liberty under an obnoxious name. The reproach on this head, however, is felt as an honour, when it appears by their conduct that they despair of attacking liberty with success, while the reputation of dissenters remains undiminished. The enmity of the vicious is the test of virtue.

Dissenters are reproached with the appellation of republicans; but the truth of the charge has neither appeared from facts, nor been supported by any reasonable evidence. Among them, as among other classes, (and in no greater proportion,) there are persons to be found, no doubt, who, without any hostility to the present government, prefer in theory a republican to a monarchical form; a point on which the most enlightened men in all ages have entertained very different opinions. In a government like ours, consisting of three simple elements, as this variety of sentiment may naturally be expected to take place, so if any predilection be felt toward one more than another, that partiality seems most commendable which inclines to the republican part. At most it is only the love of liberty to excess. The mixture of monarchy and nobility is chiefly of use as it gives regularity, order, and stability to popular freedom. Were we, however, without any proof, to admit that dissenters are more tinctured with republican

principles than others, it might be considered as the natural effect of the absurd conduct of the legislature. Exposed to pains and penalties, excluded from all offices of trust, proscribed by the spirit of the present reign, menaced and insulted wherever they appear, they must be more than men if they felt no resentment, or were passionately devoted to the ruling powers. To expect affection in return for injury, is to gather where they have not scattered, and reap where they have not sown. The superstition of dissenters is not so abject as to prompt them to worship the constitution through fear. Yet as they have not forgotten the benefits it imparted, and the protection it afforded till of late, they are too much its friends to flatter its defects, or defend its abuses. Their only wish is to see it reformed, and reduced to its original principles.

In recent displays of loyalty they must acknowledge themselves extremely defective. They have never plundered their neighbours to shew their attachment to the King; nor has their zeal for religion ever broke out into oaths and execrations. They have not proclaimed their respect for regular government by a breach of the laws; or attempted to maintain tranquillity by riots. These beautiful specimens of loyalty belong to the virtue and moderation of the high church party alone, with whose character they perfectly correspond.

In a scurrilous paper which has been lately circulated with malignant industry, the dissenters at

large, and Dr. Price in particular, are accused, with strange effrontery, of having involved us in the American war; when it is well known they ever stood aloof from that scene of guilt and blood.

Had their remonstrances been regarded, the calamities of that war had never been incurred; but, what is of more consequence in the estimation of anonymous scribblers, there would have remained one lie less to swell the catalogue of their falsehoods.

From the joy which dissenters have expressed at the French revolution, it has been most absurdly inferred, that they wish for a similar event in England; without considering that such a conclusion is a libel on the British constitution, as it must proceed on a supposition that our government is as despotic as the ancient monarchy of France. To imagine the feelings must be the same when the objects are so different, shews a most lamentable degree of malignity and folly.

Encompassed as dissenters are by calumny and reproach, they have still the satisfaction to reflect, that these have usually been the lot of distinguished virtue; and that in the corrupt state of men's interests and passions, the unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.

They will be still more happy if the frowns of the world should be the means of reviving that spirit of evangelical piety which once distinguished them so highly. Content if they can gain protection, without being so romantic as to aspire to

praise, they will continue firm, I doubt not, in those principles which they have hitherto acted on, unseduced by rewards, and unshaken by dangers. From the passions of their enemies, they will appeal to the judgment of posterity;—a more impartial tribunal. Above all, they will calmly await the decision of the Great Judge, before whom both they and their enemies must appear, and the springs and sources of their mutual animosity be laid open; when the clouds of misrepresentation being scattered, it will be seen they are a virtuous and oppressed people, who are treading, though with unequal steps, in the path of those illustrious prophets, apostles, and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy. In the mean time they are far from envying the popularity and applause which may be acquired in a contrary course; esteeming the reproaches of freedom above the splendours of servitude.

Section VI.

On the Causes of the Present Discontents.

We have arrived, it is a melancholy truth which can no longer be concealed, we have at length arrived at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform can save us from ruin. An amendment in the representation is wanted, as well to secure the liberty we already possess, as to open the way for the removal of those abuses

which pervade every branch of the administration. The accumulation of debt and taxes, to a degree unexampled in any other age or country, has so augmented the influence of the crown, as to destroy the equipoise and balance of the constitution. The original design of the funding system, which commenced in the reign of King William, was to give stability to the revolution, by engaging the monied interest to embark on its bottom. It immediately advanced the influence of the crown, which the whigs then exalted as much as possible, as a countervail to the interest of the Pretender.

The mischief of this short-sighted policy cannot be better described than in the language of Bolingbroke. "Few men," says he, "at that time looked forward enough to foresee the consequences of the new constitution of the revenue, that was soon afterward formed; nor of the method of the funding system, that immediately took place: which, absurd as they are, have continued since, till it has become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the multiplication of taxes, and the creation of funds, would increase yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties by a natural and necessary progression, into a more real, though less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution; a due reflection on the experience of other ages and countries, would have pointed out national corruption as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of

so vast a revenue; and also, the loss of liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption."*

If there be any truth in these reflections, how much must our apprehensions be heightened by the prodigious augmentation of revenue and debt, since the time of George the First! What a harvest has been reaped from the seeds of corruption then sown!—The revenue is now upwards of seventeen millions, and though nine are employed to pay the interest of the national debt, this is small consolation, when we reflect that that debt is the remnant of wasteful, destructive wars, and that, till there is a change in the system, we are continually liable to similar calamities. The multiplied channels through which seventeen millions of money must flow into the treasury, the legion of officers it creates, the patronage its expenditure on the several branches of the administration supplies, have rendered the influence of the crown nearly absolute and decisive. The control of parliament sinks under this pressure into formality: the balance of the different orders becomes a mere theory, which serves to impose upon ignorance, and varnish corruption. There is no power in the state that can act as a sufficient antagonist to the silent irresistible force of royal patronage.

The influence of the crown, by means of its revenue, is more dangerous than prerogative, in

* Letter II. on the Study of History.

proportion as corruption operates after a more concealed manner than force. A violent act of prerogative is sensibly felt, and creates an alarm; but it is the nature of corruption to lay apprehension asleep, and to affect its purposes while the forms of liberty remain undisturbed. The first employs force to enslave the people: the second employs the people to enslave themselves. The most determined enemy to freedom can wish for nothing more than the continuance of present abuses. While the semblance of representation can be maintained, while popular delusion can be kept up, he will spare the *extremities* of liberty. He aims at a higher object, that of *striking at the heart.*

A fatal lethargy has long been spreading amongst us, attended, as is natural, with a prevailing disposition both in and out of parliament, to treat plans of reform with contempt. After the accession, place and pension bills were frequently passed by the commons though rejected by the lords; nothing of that nature is now ever attempted. A standing army in time of peace was a subject of frequent complaint, and is expressly provided against by the Bill of Rights: it is now become a part of the constitution; for though the nominal direction be placed in parliament, the mutiny bill passes as a matter of course, the forces are never disbanded; the more completely to detach them from the community, barracks are erected; and martial law is established in its utmost severity.

If freedom can survive this expedient, copied from the practice of foreign despots, it will be an instance of unexampled good fortune. Mr. Hume terms it a mortal distemper in the British constitution, of which it must *inevitably* perish.

To whatever cause it be owing, it is certain the measures of administration have, during the present reign, leaned strongly towards arbitrary power. The decision on the Middlesex election was a blow aimed at the vitals of the constitution. Before the people had time to recover from their panic, they were plunged into the American war—a war of pride and ambition, and ending in humiliation and disgrace. The spirit of the government is so well understood, that the most violent even of the clergy are content to drop their animosity, to turn their affections into a new channel, and to devote to the house of Hanover the flattery and the zeal by which they ruined the race of Stuart. There cannot be a clearer symptom of the decay of liberty than the dread of speculative opinions; which is, at present, carried to a length in this nation that can scarcely be exceeded. Englishmen were accustomed, till of late, to make political speculation the amusement of leisure, and the employment of genius; they are now taught to fear it more than death. Under the torpid touch of despotism the patriotic spirit has shrunk into a narrow compass; confined to gaze with admiration on the proceedings of parliament, and listen to the oracles of the minister with silent acquiescence, and pious awe.

Abuses are sacred, and the pool of corruption must putrify in peace. Persons who a few years back were clamorous for reform, are making atonement for having been betrayed into any appearance of virtue, by a quick return to their natural character. Is not the kingdom peopled with spies and informers? Are not inquisitorial tribunals erected in every corner of the land? A stranger who, beholding a whole nation filled with alarm, should inquire the cause of the commotion, would be a little surprised on being informed, that instead of any appearance of insurrection, or plots, a pamphlet had only been published. In a government upheld by so immense a revenue, and boasting a constitution declared to be the envy of the world, this abject distrust of its own power is more than a million lectures on corruptions and abuses. The wisdom of ages, the master-piece of human policy, complete in all its parts, and that needs no reformation, can hardly support itself against a sixpenny pamphlet, devoid, it is said, of truth or ability! To require sycophants to blush, is exacting too great a departure from the decorum of their character: but common sense might be expected to remain, after shame is extinguished.

Whoever seriously contemplates the present infatuation of the people, and the character of the leaders, will be tempted to predict the speedy downfall of liberty. They cherish the forms, while they repress the spirit of the constitution; they persecute freedom, and adorn its sepulchre. When

corruption has struck its roots so deep, it may be doubted whether even the liberty of the press be not of more detriment than advantage. The prints, which are the common sources of information, are replete with falsehood; virtue is calumniated; and scarcely are any characters safe from their blast, except the advocates of corruption. The greater part, no doubt, are in the pay of ministry, or their adherents. Thus delusion spreads, and the people are instructed to confound anarchy with reform, their friends with their oppressors.

Who can hear, without indignant contempt, the ministers' annual eulogium on the English constitution? Is the parliament so ignorant, then, that it needs to go to school every session to learn those elements of political knowledge which every Briton understands? Or is the nature of the British constitution a secret in the breast of the ministry, to be opened with the budget? Indisputable excellence wants no encomium; but this flattery is intended to bury, in an admiration of its merit, all remembrance of its defects. Whatever remains of beauty or vigour it possesses, are held in no estimation but as they produce an acquiescence in abuses. It is its imperfections only ministers admire; its corruptions that solace them. The topics of their encomium are as absurd as the purpose is infamous. The flourishing state of trade and manufactures is displayed in proof of the unequalled excellence of the British constitution, without reflecting that a temporary decay will

support with equal force an opposite conclusion. For if we owe our present prosperity to the nature of the government, our recent calamities must be traced to the same source, and that constitution which is now affirmed to be the best, must be allowed during the American war to have been the worst. That there is a connexion between commercial prosperity and the nature of a government must be admitted; but its operation is gradual and slow, not felt from year to year, but to be traced by the comparison of one age and country with another. But, allowing that our wealth may increase along with the increase of abuses, the nation, we hope, is not so sordid as to look upon wealth as the supreme good; however well that idea may correspond with the views of a ministry, who seem determined to leave us no other. Freedom, as it animates industry, by securing its rewards, opens a path to wealth; but if that wealth be suffered to debase a people, and render them venal and dependent, it will silently conduct them back again to misery and depression. Rome was never more opulent than on the eve of departing liberty. Her vast wealth was a sediment that remained on the reflux of the tide. It is quite unnecessary to remind the reader how all this at present is reversed, and that the unbounded prodigality of Mr. Pitt and his successors in the conduct of the war, which the corruption of parliament enabled them to maintain, has plunged the nation into the deepest abyss of poverty and distress.

It is singular enough, but I hope not ominous, that the flattery bestowed by the poets of antiquity on the ruling powers resembles, in every thing but its elegance, the adulation of modern sycophants. The extent of empire, the improvement of arts, the diffusion of opulence and splendour, are the topics with which Horace adorned the praises of Augustus: but the penetration of Tacitus developes, amidst these flattering appearances, the seeds of ruin. The florid bloom but ill concealed that fatal malady which preyed upon the vitals.

Between the period of national honour and complete degeneracy, there is usually an interval of national vanity, during which examples of virtue are recounted and admired without being imitated. The Romans were never more proud of their ancestors than when they ceased to resemble them. From being the freest and most high-spirited people in the world, they suddenly fell into the tamest and most abject submission. Let not the name of Britons, my countrymen, too much elate you; nor ever think yourselves safe while you abate one jot of that holy jealousy by which your liberties have been hitherto secured. The richer the inheritance bequeathed you, the more it merits your care for its preservation. The possession must be continued by that spirit with which it was at first acquired; and, as it was gained by vigilance, it will be lost by supineness. A degenerate race repose on the merit of their forefathers; the virtuous create a fund of their own. The former

look back upon their ancestors, to hide their shame; the latter look forward to posterity, to levy a tribute of admiration. In vain will you confide in the forms of a free constitution. Unless you reanimate those forms with fresh vigour, they will be melancholy memorials of what you once were, and haunt you with the shade of departed liberty. A silent stream of corruption poured over the whole land, has tainted every branch of the administration with decay. On your temperate but manly exertions depend the happiness and freedom of the latest posterity. That Assembly which sits by right of representation, will be little inclined to oppose your will, expressed in a firm, decisive manner. You may be deafened by clamour, misled by sophistry, or weakened by division, but you cannot be despised with impunity. A vindictive ministry may hang the terrors of criminal prosecution over the heads of a few with success; but at their peril will they attempt to intimidate a nation. The trick of associations, of pretended plots, and silent insurrections, will oppose a feeble barrier to the impression of the popular mind.

The theory of the constitution in the most important particulars is a satire on the practice. The theory provides the responsibility of ministers as a check to the execution of ill designs; but in reality we behold the basest of the tribe retreat from the ruin of their country, loaded with honours and with spoils. Theory tells us the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the

mistake by shewing its subservience to the crown. We learn, from the first, that the legislature is chosen by the unbiassed voice of all who can be supposed to have a will of their own; we learn, from the last, the pretended electors are but a handful of the people, who are never less at their own disposal than in the business of election. The theory holds out equal benefits to all, and equal liberty, without any other discrimination than that of a good and bad subject: its practice brands with proscription and disgrace a numerous class of inhabitants on account of their religion. In theory the several orders of the state are a check on each other; but corruption has oiled the wheels of that machinery, harmonized its motions, and enabled it to bear, with united pressure, on the happiness of the people.

The principal remedy for the diseases of the state is undoubtedly a reform in parliament; from which, as a central point, inferior improvements may issue; but as I have already treated on that subject at large, I shall not insist on it here. I cannot close this pamphlet, however, without adverting for a moment to a few of the principal objects which well merit the attention of the legislature.

On the abuses in the church, it is to little purpose to expatiate, as they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unless it be a maxim that honesty will endanger her existence, her creeds ought in all reason to corre-

spond with the sentiments of her members. The world, it is to be feared, will be little edified by the example of a church, which, in compelling its ministers to subscribe to opinions that few of them believe, is a discipline of fraud. Nor is the collection of tithes calculated to soften the odium. As a mode of union with the parishioners, they are fruitful of contention; as a restraint on the improvement of land, impolitic and oppressive; as a remnant of the Jewish law, superstitious and absurd. True magnanimity would instruct the clergy to recede from a claim which they will probably be compelled shortly to relinquish. But no reform, it seems, must take place in the church any more than in the state, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progress of its ally.

The condition of the poor in this country calls for compassion and redress. Many of them, through the want of mental improvement, are sunk almost beneath the level of humanity;* and their hard-earned pittance is so diminished by taxes, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can nourish their children, and utterly impossible to afford them education. The poor laws enacted for their relief,

* The change in this respect, since the first publication of the "Apology," is of the most gratifying kind. All ranks of society, and all persuasions of christians, have vied with each other in their efforts to give religious and other useful instruction to the children of the poor. Still, there remains much to be done, and we are with respect to the general education of the lower classes, *very* far behind the Americans, especially those in the state of New York.—Ed.

by confining their industry to a particular spot, and denying them the privilege of residing where they may exert it to the greatest advantage, are an accumulated oppression. Were industry allowed to find its level, were the poor laws abolished, and a small portion of that expense which swells the tide of corruption, the splendours of the great, and the miseries of war, bestowed on the instruction of the common people, the happy effects would descend to the remotest posterity, and open a prospect which humanity might delight to anticipate. In England, we have been adding wheel to wheel, and spring to spring, till we have rendered the machine of government far too complicated; forgetting, in the midst of wars, negotiations, and factious disputes, that the true end of civil polity is the happiness of the people. We have listened to every breeze that moves along the surface of Europe, and descried danger from afar; while deaf to the complaints of the poor, we have beheld ignorance, wretchedness, and barbarity multiply at home, without the smallest regard. Is it possible to behold with patience the numberless tribe of placemen, pensioners, and sycophants who are enriched at the public expense; a noxious spawn engendered by the corruptions of government, and nourished by its diseases. Were our immense revenue conducive to the maintenance of royal dignity, or proportioned to the exigencies of the state, it would be borne with pleasure; but, at present, it bids fair to be the purchase of our servitude.

Our laws, in order to become a proper rule of civil life, much want revision and amendment. They are, moreover, never promulgated. For this omission Judge Blackstone assigns a very curious reason: "That, being enacted by our representatives, every man is supposed, in the eye of the law, to be present in the legislature." It would be an improvement on this delegated knowledge of the law, if the penalty were also delegated, and criminals punished by representation. The laws, in their present state, are so piled into volumes, encumbered with precedents, and perplexed with intricacies, that they are often rather a snare than a guide, and are a fruitful source of the injustice they are intended to prevent. The expense is as formidable as the penalty; nor is it to any purpose to say they are the same to the poor as to the rich, while by their delay, expense, and perplexity, they are placed on an eminence, which opulence only can ascend. The commendation bestowed so liberally by foreigners on English jurisprudence, was never meant to be extended to our municipal code, which is confused, perplexed, and sanguinary in the extreme; but to the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality which marks the conduct of judges. For want of gradual improvements, to enable it to keep pace with the progress of society, the most useful operations of law are clouded by fictions.*

* See an excellent publication on this subject, entitled "Juridical Essays," by Mr. Randall.

These are a few only of the maladies which indicate a bad habit of the political body; nor can a true estimate be made of our situation so much by adverting to *particular evils*, as by an attention to the general aspect of affairs. The present crisis is, in my apprehension, the fullest of terror and of danger we have ever experienced. In the extension of excise laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined adherence to abuses displayed by parliament, in the desertion of pretended patriots, the spread of arbitrary principles, the tame subdued spirit of the nation, we behold the seeds of political ruin quickening into life. The *securities* of liberty, as was long since remarked by Dr. Price, have given way; and what remains is little more than an *indulgence*, which cannot continue long, when it ceases to be cherished in the affections of the people. The little of public virtue that still subsists, is no match for disciplined armies of corruption. The people are perishing for lack of knowledge. Disquieted by imaginary alarms, insensible to the real danger that awaits them, they are taught to court that servitude, which will be a source of misery to themselves, and to posterity.

Deplorable as the prospect is, a precarious hope may be founded, perhaps, on the magnitude of abuses. There is, it has often been remarked, an ultimate point, both of elevation and depression, in the affairs of kingdoms, to which, when they arrive, they begin to turn of their own accord, and to fall back into their ancient channels. We are certainly

entitled to all the comfort that consideration is capable of affording. Taxation can hardly be more oppressive, representation more venal and inadequate, the influence of the people more extinguished, or falsehood and deception more triumphant, than they are at present.

There is also another circumstance attending the present crisis, which, if we are wise enough to improve it, may be of the utmost advantage. Of the numberless political parties which have hitherto distracted our attention, and divided our attachment, there now remain but two; the patrons of corruption, and the friends of liberty; they who are waiting for the disorders of government to ripen into arbitrary power, and they who are anxious to bring back the constitution to its original principles. The colours by which they are distinguished are too bold and strong to be ever confounded; or if there could be any possible embarrassment in the choice, the ministry have condescended to remove that obscurity, by pursuing an interest not only distinct from, but directly opposed to that of the people. The clamour of whigs and tories hath happily subsided; and pretended patriots are at length so kind as to unmask before the people, and stand forth in their native character, the objects of just detestation. We cannot wish for better lessons of public virtue than is furnished by the contrast of their vices.

On the present war, until the views of the ministry are more unfolded, it behoves me to speak

with tenderness and reserve. If nothing more be intended than the maintenance of national honour, and the faith of treaties, it will merit the warmest support of every well-wisher to his country. But if the re-establishment of the ancient government of France be any part of the object; if it be a war with freedom, a confederacy of kings against the rights of man; it will be the last humiliation and disgrace that can be inflicted on Great Britain; and, were there any truth in tales of incantation, to behold us engaged in such a cause, were enough to disturb the repose of our ancestors, and move the ashes of the dead! The steps preparatory to the war, the inflamed passions, and the character of our allies, afford an ill omen of the temper with which it will be conducted. The pretence respecting the Netherlands certainly entitles the ministry to the praise of consistence. It is quite of a piece with the candour and sincerity which affirmed the balance of Europe to be destroyed by the seizure of Oczakow, but denied it was endangered by the conquest of Poland, and the invasion of France.

The French revolution, we cannot but remember, was from the first an object of jealousy to ministers. There needed not the late unhappy excesses, the massacres of September, and the execution of Louis, to excite or display their hostility. It appeared in the insult and derision of their retainers, from the highest to the lowest. If they meant fairly to the interests of general liberty, why that

uneasiness at the fall of despotism in a neighbouring country? Why render parliament a theatre of abuse on a revolution, whose commencement was distinguished by unexampled mildness and tranquillity? But this part of their conduct was likewise consistent. Intent on the destruction of liberty in one country, they were disconcerted at seeing it revive in another; and before they ventured to extinguish the dying taper, waited for the surrounding scene to be shut up in darkness. I am perfectly aware that to speak in terms of decency and respect of the French revolution, is to incur, in the prevailing disposition of the times, the last of infamies. If we dare to rejoice at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom, it must be at the peril of the foulest imputations that imagination can invent, or malignity apply. In contempt, however, of these calumnies, I am free to confess, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear, the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history. The friends of liberty contemplate the crimes and disorders with which it has been stained* with the deepest regret; but they still hope that they will

* The execution of the king was certainly a most cruel and unjustifiable transaction, alike repugnant to law, order, and humanity. Without being conducive to any views of policy whatever, it seems to have been merely a gratification of the most detestable passions. The treatment of the beautiful and unfortunate queen, and of the royal family, is barbarous and unmanly in the extreme. When we look at their sufferings, humanity weeps, and pity forgets their crimes.

in the result be more than compensated, by the grandeur of its principles, and the beneficence of its effects. Instead of wishing for a similar event in England, they are intent on reform chiefly to avoid that necessity. Under every *form* of government they know how to recognise the divine aspect of freedom, and without it can be satisfied with none. The evils of anarchy and of despotism are two extremes which they equally dread: and between which no middle path can be found, but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either side, the streams of corruption must be drained off, the independence of parliament restored, the ambition of aristocracy repressed, and the majesty of the people lift itself up. It is possible to retreat from the brink of a precipice, but woe to that nation which sleeps upon it!

REVIEW

OF THE

APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

PUBLISHED IN

THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN:

AND

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1822.]

REVIEW

OF

MR. HALL'S FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.*

Extracted from the Christian Guardian for Jan. 1822.

"THE political principles of the Bible are simple, distinct, and plain. The sacred writers enter into no niceties, draw no lines of exact demarcation, meet no involved cases of civil casuistry; but, speaking of mankind generally as alike depraved and unruly, and of governments as the creations of God's providence, they inculcate, without qualification, reservation, or restriction, the obvious and indispensable duties of submission, honour, and obedience.

"It has been, however, very much the fashion of late to get rid of these unpleasant and '*degrading*' injunctions, by pleading the change of time and circumstances, and the difference between the laws and system of government under which we are privileged to live, and those of the apostolic days. Now, as to the general duty of obedience, it is obvious that it must apply rather *more* than *less* strongly to those who live under a paternal government, than to those who live under a tyrannical one. At the same time we are ready to allow, that the system of freedom which, in this country, gives to the people a share in the legislature, and an influence over the government, renders

* In order that the propriety of Mr. Hall's reply may be fairly estimated, it has been thought right to reprint the original article that called it forth.—ED.

the submission due from them less *implicit* and *uninquiring*, at the same time that it increases the obligation to its cheerful payment.

"But, although it be conceded that, under a constitution which renders the people a party to their own government, it is lawful and proper for laymen to interest themselves intimately in political concerns, and even, to a certain extent, to participate in political contests,—there is one body of men whom we could ever wish to see taking no other part in these matters than as moderators, instructors, and peace-makers.

"The ministers of the gospel must, in the discharge of their duty,—they must, if they will '*declare the whole counsel* of God,' sometimes touch upon those passages of scripture which inculcate the *duties of subjects*. While St. Paul, in the days of Nero himself, was led by the Holy Spirit to write, 'Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;' and to pronounce, without hesitation, 'He that resisteth the power,' tyrannical as it was in the extreme, 'resisteth the ordinance of God;' and while similar passages abound in the inspired volume, it cannot be thought consistent with the character of a preacher of the gospel to maintain an absolute *silence* on these topics. But there is one rule which, in our opinion, ministers would do well to follow, and that is, to go no further than the Bible will carry them. The war of parties and factions, the continual struggle of political leaders, the various questions of constitutional casuistry, are subjects which lie beyond this boundary, and with which they would do well not to embroil themselves. The servant of the Lord is exhorted 'not to strive,' but 'to cut off occasion from them which desire occasion:' and, assuredly, he will find that the bare discharge of his plain duty in these things, will expose him to sufficient obloquy and reproach.

"Entertaining this view of the subject, it is with sorrow that we observe the republication, under his own immediate sanction, of Mr. Hall's 'Apology for the Freedom of the Press.' This work was first given to the world about thirty

years ago, and has been long since forgotten, or remembered only as one of the sins of its author's youth. Since its disappearance, Mr. H. has so much better employed his time and his great talents, that he may now be considered as standing in the very first rank among the Nonconformists of the present day. And is it not a lamentable thing to see such a man stepping forward, in the ripeness of his years, and at the height of his well-earned reputation, to obtrude himself on the public in the degraded character of a violent party-scribe:—and yet, in what other light can we consider the man, who, in so uncalled-for and gratuitous a manner, and at so comparatively peaceful a period, sends into the world, with the sanction of his name, and of his latest corrections, a new edition of such a pamphlet as this?

"He indeed states, as an excuse for the republication, that the term of copyright being expired, it was no longer in his power to prevent the reprinting of this work. The law, however, is not so; the power of perpetuating its oblivion lay still in his hands. But, had he even been correct on this point, where was the necessity for his being an active agent in this reappearance?

"To characterize the tract before us appropriately, we need only observe, that the principal topics discussed by this '*minister of the gospel*' are, the right of public discussion, the propriety of political associations, *parliamentary reform*, the rights of men, the character of dissenters, the present discontents. The work is extremely personal, and great bitterness is shown towards the late Bishop Horsley, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Pitt. We shall not imitate Mr. Hall's example, by entering into a discussion on the subject of Mr. Pitt's political character: but we should have hoped that the reflection of his undoubted integrity, and of that perfect devotion to his country, which led him to sacrifice even life itself in its service, might have spared him, at the distance of sixteen years from his death, a new volley of bitter reproach from one whose vocation is '*the gospel of peace.*'

"As to the character of Bishop Horsley, it is now placed far beyond the reach of his adversaries; and the christian world will know how to appreciate invectives against such a man, from one who is at the same time the eulogist of Priestley and Price, the Socinians, and of Mary Wolstonecraft, the female libertine and deist.

"Looking, then, upon this work as one of which a critical analysis would be ill placed in the pages of the Christian Guardian, we shall conclude with a specimen or two of the political creed of Mr. Hall, and of the manner in which he supports it.

"He is then, as far as professed doctrine can make him, plainly and clearly a radical reformer. He pleads for 'annual parliaments,' for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the *exclusion* of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for 'the sovereignty of the people.' In what part of the sacred volume he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine.

"In fact, the whole pamphlet is an argument in favour of the supremacy and infallibility of the people, and of the necessity of paying the most implicit obedience to the least expression of their will. Now, could these notions have been carried into practice at the time they were written, (soon after the Birmingham riots,) and could a legislature have been formed upon Mr. H.'s universal suffrage plan, the necessary and inevitable consequence would have been, that, as the feeling of the multitude ran violently against all the friends of the French revolution, Mr. H. and most of his fellow-labourers and admirers would have been silenced, banished, or hanged. So much for the *effects* which might be expected to follow Mr. Hall's plan. And as for the *principles* upon which that plan is founded, we find him broadly stating, in the latter end of this work, with admirable consistency, that 'calumny and reproach are usually the lot of distinguished virtue,' and that '*the*

unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.' Now, if the fact be so, it cannot be for the good of the people that this perpetually erroneous criterion should govern the affairs of the state.

"Mr. Hall concludes his prefixed advertisement, with the hope 'that the reader will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expression, that the work is an *eulogium on a dead friend;*' which is asserting, in other words, that the press is enslaved, and its liberty departed. And, having written this some years since, he now coolly republishes it, after witnessing the acquittals of Hone and Wooller, and while the wretched Carlile is braving every effort that can be made to stop the torrent of blasphemy which has so long issued from his warehouse.

"Again, Mr. H. assured us, thirty years since, that we had then '*at length arrived* at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform could save us from ruin.' Now, since the first publication of this prediction, we have maintained a contest of long duration with the greatest conqueror of modern times, and have fairly subdued him. We have immensely augmented the extent of our empire, and increased its ratio of population. We have tripled our commerce and our revenue. We have improved, it is to be hoped, the state of our internal population by the establishment of schools, and the increase of places of worship: and we have made some progress in the commencement, at least, of the great work of evangelizing the whole world.

"And after all this, Mr. Hall comes forward, with much admirable simplicity, to tell us of this wonderful prophecy of his, delivered only the third part of a century since, that without *immediate reform in parliament*, *ruin* was then *inevitable.* Now, it is certain that this same *immediate reform* has not yet taken place, although one whole generation has passed away since the promulgation of this prediction. Has the dreadful alternative, then, fallen upon us? Have we been crushed by this *inevitable ruin?*

"The present comparatively prosperous and improving

circumstances of the kingdom answers, No! to this question. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better*, and not *worse*, than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage.

"If there be any exception to this state of general improvement, it is to be found in the depression of the agricultural interest of the country. But we are told, by those who ought to be judges, that the evils which threaten these classes have arisen from the want of sufficient legislative protection. And do we not know, from the conduct of the mobs of 1815, that a reformed parliament, a universal suffrage parliament, according to Mr. Hall's plan, would have withheld even the partial protection which has hitherto been granted, and would have thereby made, what is now distress and perplexity, absolute ruin and destruction? So much for the necessity and the effects of reform.

"It is with the most painful feelings that we are thus compelled to animadvert on this uncalled-for, and altogether unnecessary, republication. We repeat, that the general principle upon which we disapprove of it is, that a minister of the gospel will always best consult the interests of his flock, and the dignity of his own character, by abstaining from any political discussion which transgresses the bounds prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Hall has overstepped these limits, and has plunged into the thickest of the war of party politics. He has also chosen, we apprehend, the side which was generally found in most direct opposition to the scripture injunctions of peace, quietness, and obedience. And as the weight of his character, and the authority of his name, render error from his pen trebly dangerous, we have felt only the more imperatively called upon to enter our protest against the principles which he has endeavoured to lay down, and to unmask the sophistry of the arguments by which he has attempted to support them."

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

To the Editor of the Leicester Journal.,

SIR,

A VIOLENT attack on my character having appeared in your paper a few weeks since, contained in an extract from a periodical work, entitled the *Christian Guardian*, I rely on your impartiality for permitting me to repel the accusation through the same medium. If the misrepresentations which I have to complain of had been confined within the bounds of decency, I should have consulted my ease by remaining silent: but the writer, whoever he is, has availed himself of the impunity attached to anonymous communications so unsparingly, that I might be justly charged, not only with a criminal indifference to character, but with being accessary to the delusion of the public, were I to make no reply.

The amount of my offence consists in uttering a new edition of a political pamphlet, which made its first appearance many years since, and passed through several editions. This writer says, I might have suppressed it; but the contrary is

the fact. The term of copyright is well known to extend to fourteen years, after which any one is at liberty to republish a work without the consent of the Author. More than that time had elapsed since the last edition, and as it was at the option of any bookseller to reprint it, so I was assured from various quarters, that, whether I consented or not, it would certainly be republished. The only alternative that remained was, either to suffer it to come forth in a form, perhaps, most incorrect, and mingled with foreign infusions, or to publish it under my own eye, and with such alterations and corrections as the Author might deem proper. The latter was preferred, and for this a torrent of invective has issued from the *Christian Guardian.*

It certainly is very unusual for a writer to suppress his own publications, unless he has recanted the principles they contain. To persevere in doing so, naturally exposes him to the suspicion, either that he has renounced his former opinions, or that he is afraid to avow them: but neither of these situations is mine. I have changed no principle, and I feel no fear. Why, then, should I act in such a manner as must render me perpetually liable to either of these imputations? For a considerable time, indeed, after loud and repeated importunities, I declined a compliance with the wishes expressed for republication, from a sincere reluctance to engage in political controversy. By one party, in the mean while, it was

my fortune to be so unequivocally claimed as a convert, and by the other, so assailed with reproaches as an apostate, that I was convinced by experience there was no other way of putting an end to the misrepresentations of both, but to republish the original pamphlet. Had I never written it, the same motives which made me reluctant to reprint, might probably have prevented my writing it; but since there is not a principle in it which I can conscientiously retract, and my silence has occasioned numerous misrepresentations and mistakes, the fair and manly part was doubtless to republish it. An ingenuous mind is not less ashamed of receiving praises it is conscious it has not deserved, than indignant at reproaches which are not merited.

But a minister of the gospel, it seems, is on no occasion to meddle with party politics. How exactly this maxim was adhered to at the commencement of the late war, when military banners were consecrated, and the people every where summoned to arms

> By pulpit drum ecclesiastic,
> Beat with fist instead of a stick,

must be fresh in the recollection of my readers.

The men who in the garb of clergymen, bustle at electioneering meetings, forsooth, are not really such, but merely assume the disguise of that holy order, since it would be uncandid to suppose they can so universally lose sight of what is befitting ministers of the gospel. The venerable bench of

bishops, who sit in the House of Lords, either attend in silent pomp, without taking any part in the deliberations, or they violate the character of ministers of the gospel. We must have been grossly imposed upon by the public prints, which informed us of the clergy of a whole archdeaconry, or diocese, meeting to petition parliament against the catholic claims, since they could never, with one consent, depart so far from the decorum of ministers of the gospel!

The plain state of the case is, not that the writer is offended at my meddling with politics, but that I have meddled on the wrong side. Had the same mediocrity of talent been exerted in eulogizing the measures of ministers, his greetings would have been as loud as his invective is bitter. But it was exerted to expose public abuses, to urge the necessity of reform, and lay open the tergiversation of the heaven-born minister, and Sunday duellist, who, after devoting the day of rest to deeds of blood, has, by a strange fatality, obtained a sort of political beatification. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

Another head of accusation is, that I have censured the character of Bishop Horsley, whose character, the Reviewer tells us, "is far removed beyond my attack, while I have eulogized Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, Socinians." To this it is sufficient to reply, that Dr. Price was *not* a Socinian, but an Arian; he wrote professedly in confutation of socinianism; and though I disapprove of his religious principles, I feel no hesitation in affirming,

in spite of the frantic and unprincipled abuse of Burke, that a more ardent and enlightened friend of his country never lived, than that venerable patriarch of freedom. Such were the sentiments of the worshipful corporation of London, who in token of their esteem presented him with the freedom of the city in a golden box; such was the judgement of Mr. Pitt, who long professed himself his admirer, and condescended to seek his advice on questions of finance. Dr. Priestley, it is acknowledged, was a Socinian; but it was not under that character that he was eulogized. It was as the friend of liberty, the victim of intolerance, and the author of some of the most brilliant philosophical discoveries of modern times, for which he was celebrated throughout Europe, and his name enrolled as a member of the most illustrious institutions; so that my eulogy was but a mere feeble echo of the applause which resounded from every civilized portion of the globe. And are we suddenly fallen back into the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, during which the spell of a stupid and unfeeling uniformity bound the nations in iron slumbers, that it has become a crime to praise a man for talents which the whole world admired, and for virtues which his enemies confessed, merely because his religious creed was erroneous? If any thing could sink orthodoxy into contempt, it would be its association with such gothic barbarity of sentiment, such reptile meanness. What renders the wretched bigotry

of the Reviewer the more conspicuous, is, that the eulogy in question was written almost immediately after the Birmingham riots, that disgraceful ebullition of popular phrenzy, during which a ferocious mob tracked his steps like bloodhounds, demolished his house, destroyed his library and apparatus, and, advancing from thence to the destruction of private and public buildings, filled the whole town and vicinity with terror and dismay.

What sort of a *Christian Guardian* the Reviewer would have proved on that occasion, may be easily inferred from his passing over these atrocities in silence, while he discharges his malice on their unoffending victim.

The maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, admits of exceptions; and as I am vilified for censuring Bishop Horsley, whose character, it is affirmed, "is far removed beyond my attack," while I praised Priestley, the Socinian, justice compels me to remark (what the Reviewer probably knows well enough) that in the virtues of private life, Dr. Priestley was as much superior to his antagonist, as he was inferior in the correctness of his speculative theology.

From the principles avowed in the *Apology*, this writer asserts, that it is evident I am to be classed to all intents and purposes with *radical reformers*. This charge is grounded on my recommendation of annual parliaments and universal suffrage. Now he either knows that Mr. Pitt, in conjunction with the Duke of Richmond, presided at public

meetings, in which annual parliaments and the extension of the right of suffrage to all householders were recommended, or he does not. If he pleads ignorance of the fact, what presumption is it for a man so uninformed to write upon the subject! If he knows it, let me ask, was Mr. Pitt a *radical reformer* at the time he recommended those measures? If he was, I plead guilty to the charge; but if he was *not*, the recommendation of a similar plan is no evidence of my being a *radical*. For my own part, I feel the utmost contempt of the charge of radicalism. A radical reformer, if we attend to the import of words, is one that goes to the *root* of the evil, that proposes not merely to palliate, but to extirpate it. And what is that reform worth, that proposes less? He who labours under an inveterate malady, wishes for a *radical* cure: he would put little value on a remedy that should mitigate the pain, without reaching the source of the disorder. If the appellation of *radical reformer* is intended to denote a revolutionist, it is most absurdly applied to the advocate of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, because the first of these measures is merely a revival of the ancient practice, and the latter most consonant to the genius of a free constitution, which presupposes the extension of the elective franchise to all who can be presumed to have a will of their own: the exercise of this right, coupled with the practice of voting by ballot, would, in my humble opinion, be the best expedient for securing

the freedom and tranquillity of elections. Be this as it may, a sincere proposal of *reform* must differ essentially from the proposal of a revolution. If, by styling me a *radical* reformer, this writer intends to impute revolutionary views, I say it is a calumny and a falsehood; and I challenge him to produce a single sentence from my publications which sustains such a charge, or which convicts me of hostility to the existing order of things, as consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. But if he means, that I am for such a reform as will cut up corruption by the roots, I feel no inclination to disavow it. He wishes, it is evident, to fix the impression that I am hostile to the regal branch of the constitution; but shrinks from making the assertion, and endeavours to convey the venom of his accusations through the subtle vehicle of a dark and ambiguous phraseology.

For what purpose, but that of exciting hatred and horror, he has thought fit to couple my name with the mention of Hone and Carlile, it is not easy to conjecture. The blasphemy of their publications is quite as disgusting to me as to himself; but I am at a loss to conceive the justness of that reasoning which would infer that no political corruption, however enormous, no mal-administration, however flagrant, must be exposed to animadversion, until these men have ceased to exhale their impieties. Let this principle once be admitted, and we shall never want Hones and Carliles in abundance: to remove a shield so easily purchased,

and so effectual in the protection of every abuse, might be deemed an infatuation.

"He (the author of the Apology) pleads," says the Reviewer, "for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the exclusion of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for the sovereignty of the people. In what part of the sacred volume," he adds, "he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine." The fatuity of this remark baffles all description. For why may I not retort his own language, and say,—This author pleads for septennial parliaments, for limited suffrage, for the admission of the relatives of noblemen to the House of Commons, and for the support of ecclesiastical establishments; but in what part of the sacred volume he finds the least sanction for them, I am at a loss to imagine? But when did I plead for the publication of blasphemy, fettered or unfettered? To plead for the liberty of divulging speculative opinions is one thing, and to assert the right of uttering blasphemy is another. For, blasphemy, which is the speaking contumeliously of God, is not a speculative error; it is an overt act; a crime which no state should tolerate. In relation to the question of ecclesiastical establishments, since I am challenged to produce any passage from Scripture which sanctions my opposition to them, I beg leave to refer him to our

Lord's declaration: *Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* That *national* churches, or exclusive establishments of religion by the civil magistrate, are one of these plants, will not be denied; since nothing of that kind, it is universally allowed, existed during the three first and purest ages of christianity, and not being authorised by the *great* Head of the church, it must, if we believe him, be rooted up. I have used the term *great* Head of the church, by way of distinction from that *little* head* which the church of England has invented, and on which, whether it be a beauty or a deformity in the body of Christ, the Scriptures are certainly as silent as on universal suffrage and annual parliaments.

It may not be improper in this place to notice a curious argument which the Reviewer adduces in support of his darling tenet of passive obedience and non-resistance, from the prevailing and inherent depravity of human nature. He reminds us that mankind are represented in scripture as "alike depraved and unruly," and, from these premises, attempts to enforce that interpretation of scripture which would annihilate the liberties of mankind, and reduce them, without "restriction or reservation," to a passive submission to their political superiors. On another occasion I have suffi-

* A friend in conversation with Mr. Hall asked him whether, on cool meditation, he did not consider this allusion to the "little head" as a breach of taste? "Why (said he) I must confess it was better for a joke in the parlour, than to appear in print; but I never expected it would go beyond the columns of a newspaper."

ciently rescued the sentiments of the inspired writers from such a detestable imputation, by shewing that their design is merely to inculcate the general duty of obedience to government, as the ordinance of God, while they leave the just bounds of authority, and the limits of obedience, to the regulation and adjustment of reason and experience; a task to which they are perfectly adequate. But how does the depravity of human nature evince the necessity of passive obedience and non-resistance, unless it is contended that the ruling part of mankind are *not* depraved? That mankind are naturally "depraved and unruly" affords a good argument for the existence of *Government itself;* but since they are "*alike* depraved and unruly," since governors partake of the same corruption as the people, aggravated too often by the possession of power, which inflames the passions and corrupts the heart, to allege the depravity of human nature as a reason for submission to arbitrary power, involves the absurdity of supposing that the cure of one degree of wickedness is to be obtained by affording unlimited licence to a greater. Retrace the annals of all times and nations, and you will find in the triumph of despotism the triumph of wickedness; you will find that men have been virtuous, noble, and disinterested, just in proportion as they have been free.

The Reviewer affects to triumph over me, on account of the supposed failure of the prediction, that ruin would speedily ensue, unless prevented

by Reform. "Has this dreadful alternative," he asks, "fallen upon us? The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answers, No. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better* and not *worse* than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage."

I am at a loss to reply in suitable terms to a writer who seems to glory in setting truth at defiance. Let me ask the reader, whether he thinks there is a single person to be found in the nation, who really believes our condition as a people is improved within the last thirty years? Where is this improvement to be found? Is it in the augmentation of the national debt to three times its former amount; in the accumulated weight of taxes; in the increase of the poor rates; in the depression of land to less than one-half of its former value; in the ruin of the agricultural interest, in the thousands and tens of thousands of farmers who are distrained for rent, and they and their families reduced to beggary? Has this writer already forgotten the recent distress of the manufacturing class, who, from failure of employment, and the depression of wages, were plunged into despair, while numbers of them quitted their homes, and sought a precarious and scanty relief, by dragging through the country loaded waggons and carts, like beasts of burden? Is it in the rapid and portentous multiplication of crimes, by which our prisons are glutted with malefactors? If these

are indications of increasing prosperity, we may justly adopt the language of the liturgy, from such prosperity "Good Lord, deliver us."

To do the writer justice, he has the grace to admit something like an exception respecting the agricultural interest, though he expresses himself with the diffidence becoming the solution of so difficult a problem. "If any exception," he says, "can be found, it is in the agricultural interest;" but he adds, "If those are to be believed *who ought to be judges,* this is to be ascribed to the want of legal protection." Now, two corn-bills have been passed of late years for the express protection of the agriculturist; the last of these in open contempt of the sentiments and wishes of the people. Previously to the passing of these bills, agriculture was in a comparatively flourishing state; since these laws were enacted it has experienced a depression beyond all example; and, in the face of these facts, this writer has the assurance to inform us, that in the opinion of those *who ought to be judges,* the evil is wholly to be ascribed to the *want* of legal protection. But who are these highly privileged mortals, who are to be implicitly believed, because "they ought to be judges?" If there is any class of persons whose opinion on these questions is entitled to deference and respect, they are undoubtedly political economists, men who have made the sources of national wealth the principal subject of their inquiry: and where will he find one, from Adam Smith to the present time, who

has not reprobated the interference of legislature with the price of corn? To say nothing of the reasoning of that great philosopher, which is unanswerable, common sense will teach us, that laws to raise the price of produce, are unjust and oppressive taxes upon the whole community, for the exclusive benefit of a part. There is a description of men who are accustomed, systematically, to yield up their understandings to others, who in their view "ought to be judges:" it is needless to add, that the present writer is evidently of this *servum pecus*, this tame and passive herd: and that his knowledge of the subject is just what might be expected from one who thinks by proxy. These men, forgetting, or affecting to forget, that the exercise of power, in whatever hands it is placed, will infallibly degenerate into tyranny, unless it is carefully watched, make it their whole business to screen its abuses; to suppress inquiry, stifle complaint, and inculcate on the people, as their duty, a quiet and implicit submission to the direction of those who, to speak in the vocabulary of slaves, "ought to be judges." These are the men by whom the constitution is endangered; these the maxims by which free states are enslaved. If that freedom which is the birth-right of Britons is destined to go down to succeeding generations, it must result from the prevalence of an opposite spirit; a lofty enthusiasm, an ardent attachment to liberty, and an incessant jealousy of the tendency of power to enlarge its pretensions and extend its encroachments.

The Reviewer asserts, that "my whole pamphlet "is an argument in favour of the supremacy and "infallibility of the people, and of the necessity of "paying an implicit obedience to the least expres- "sion of their will."

This, I must assure the reader, is a gross and wilful misrepresentation. In no part of the pamphlet have I pleaded for any such doctrine. All that I have asserted is, that in proportion as the *House of Commons* is in unison with the people, animated by the same sympathies, and affected by the same interests, in the same proportion will it accomplish the design of its functions as a *representative* assembly; and that a reform is absolutely necessary, in order to restore it to that conjunction of interests and of feelings on which its utility, as the popular branch of the legislature, depends. The necessity of such an union between the people and their representatives, is manifest from the very meaning of the terms, for it were quite needless for them to be at the pains of choosing men, who, in consequence of a foreign bias, are prepared to contradict their sentiments, and neglect their interests. A House of Commons which should chiefly consist of court sycophants and tyrants, would exhibit nothing more than the mockery of representation. By artfully transferring what I have said of *one* branch of the legislature to the *whole*, and presenting even that in an exaggerated form, he has represented me as reducing the government to such an immediate and incessant

dependence on the popular will, as never entered my thoughts, and would be utterly incompatible with the genius of a limited monarchy.

Having already trespassed on the patience of my readers, I shall close with one remark on the eulogium pronounced by the Reviewer on the character of the late Mr. Pitt. He appears to be extremely shocked with the freedom and severity of my strictures on his conduct, as implying "a forgetfulness of his singular disinterestedness, and his perfect devotion to his country." As this has become a favourite topic with the admirers of that celebrated minister, it is necessary to remind them, that there are other vices besides the love of money, and other virtues besides that of dying poor. It may be easily admitted, that the ambition which grasps at the direction of an empire, and the pitiful passion for accumulation, were not the inmates of the same bosom. In minds of a superior order, ambition, like Aaron's rod, is quite sufficient to swallow up the whole fry of petty propensities. Far be it from me to wish to withhold an atom of the praise justly due to him. That he devoted much time, and a considerable portion of talent, to the affairs of his country, is undeniable. The evils which he has brought upon us were not the production of an ordinary mind, nor the work of a day, nor done in sport; but what I contend for is, that, to say nothing of his unparalleled apostasy, his devotion to his country, and what was worse, its devotion to him, have been the source of more

calamity to this nation than any other event that has befallen it; and that the memory of Pitt will be identified in the recollection of posterity with accumulated taxes, augmented debt, extended pauperism, a debasement and prostration of the public mind, and a system of policy not only hostile to the cause of liberty at home, but prompt and eager to detect and tread out every spark of liberty in Europe; in a word, with all those images of terror and destruction, which the name imports. The enthusiasm with which his character is regarded by a numerous class of his countrymen, will be ascribed, by a distant age, to that mysterious infatuation which, in the inscrutable counsels of Heaven, is the usual, the destined, precursor of the fall of states.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

LEICESTER,
Feb. 5, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

SOME excellent persons, who did not know Mr. HALL, often express great concern that so good a man should have suffered his thoughts to be so much engrossed in politics, as they suppose must have been the case. The truth, however, is, that few men gave themselves less to political matters than he did. At the deeply interesting period in which he wrote his political tracts, the whole world was absorbed in the contemplation of political events, and the discussion of political principles. Among the disputants of the two great parties into which this country was divided, clergymen and other ministers took a most active part, and the class denominated Evangelical were by no means the least active. Some of the most eminent of them, indeed, engaged in that sad and then frequent profanation of holy places and things, the consecration of the colours of a volunteer corps in a parish church; and one even put on a military cockade, in order to incite his parishioners to come forward in the public cause. The genuine principles of our admirable constitution were thought by many to be in imminent peril; yet all who wrote in their defence were exposed to obloquy. A learned prelate asserted, in the House of Lords, that "the people had nothing to do with "the laws but to obey them," and his sentiment was loudly applauded. In a kindred spirit, during the trials of Muir and Palmer, for "leasing-making," or sedition, in Scotland, one of the Lords of Justiciary declared that "*no "man had a right to speak of the Constitution unless he "possessed landed property;*" and another affirmed that "*since the abolition of* TORTURE, *there was no adequate "punishment for sedition.*" In such a season of violent excitement, when upright men of every shade of opinion

thought the most valuable principles at stake, no wonder that heats and animosities prevailed, and that all expressed themselves with vehemence,—often with acerbity. Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was of too ardent and generous a spirit to be quiescent in that signal crisis of public affairs. He discharged what, in the exigency, appeared to him an imperious duty, and then remained silent, until, after an interval of many years, at the intreaty of his friends, he broke the silence in a brief effort of self-defence against anonymous misrepresentation. It was, indeed, his permanent conviction (see vol. I. p. 362) "that the teach-"ers of religion are called to a nobler occupation, than to "subserve the interests of party, or fan the flames of public "dissension." Nay, for some years, so great was his indifference to political concerns, that he scarcely ever read a newspaper, or did more in conversation than advert for a moment, if at all, to public measures. His political principles, however, remained the same through life; with those simple modifications which the lapse of time and the occurrence of new events, were calculated to produce in the breast of a considerate man. Though he thought them important, he uniformly regarded them as subordinate to others. He cherished with delight the anticipations of a new and better order of things amongst mankind; but he looked mainly for the realizing of his hopes to the operation of a higher class of principles than the politics of this world can supply,—principles of heavenly origin, which, flowing from Religious Truth, and acting at once upon the spiritual part of our nature, change and improve the mass of society by transforming the characters of the men who compose it.

Some of the following pieces yield ample proofs of the prevalence of these sentiments.

That there are occasions on which pious men not only may, but must, if they act fully on scriptural principles, censure public men and public measures, has been clearly shewn by one of the gentlest as well as most excellent of men—GRANVILLE SHARP—in his Essay on "*The Law of* "*Passive Obedience.*"

AN ADDRESS

TO THE PUBLIC,

ON AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT, CONNECTED WITH

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER

OF THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1813.]

AN ADDRESS.

As the subject of the renewal of the charter of the East India Company is shortly to come before parliament, with a view to a final decision, it is presumed that it will not be deemed impertinent to invite the attention of the legislature to a particular connected with that subject, which is judged of high importance. The point to which we refer, respects the propriety of inserting a clause in the new charter, authorizing the peaceable dissemination of christian principles in India.* For want of

* The object for which Mr. Hall, and many other pious men, so earnestly pleaded, was accomplished, at least as to its practical results: though there is still room to interpose obstructions, if men in power should be inclined to present them. The act which passed in 1813, "for continuing in the East India Company for "a farther term the possession of the British territories in India," contains four clauses (viz. 33, 34, 35, 36) which relate to "per- "sons desirous of going to India for the purpose of promoting the "religious and moral improvement of the natives." The nature of this part of the enactment will be understood from the subjoined brief official abstract:—

"If the Court of Directors think fit to refuse the applications "for permission made in behalf of such persons, they are to "transmit the applications to the Board of Commissioners, who, "if they see no valid objection to granting the permission, may

such a provision, the missionaries who have lately visited that country, have been under the necessity of going there by the circuitous route of America, besides meeting with considerable obstructions in their attempts to settle, and being exposed to much vexation and interruption in their quiet efforts to plant the christian faith. It must surely be considered as an extraordinary fact, that in a country under the government of a people professing christianity, *that* religion should be the only one that is discountenanced and suppressed.

That the most complete toleration should be extended to the various modes of belief prevailing in those remote dependencies of our empire, and that none of the inhabitants should be subjected to the slightest inconvenience on account of their

"authorize the said persons to proceed to any of the Company's "principal settlements, provided with a certificate of sanction "from the Directors. The Court of Directors, however, may "make representations concerning such persons to the Board of "Commissioners: and those persons on arriving in the East "Indies are to be subject to the regulations of the local govern- "ments. Further, the governments in India may declare the cer- "tificates and licences of such persons to be void, if they shall "appear by their conduct to have forfeited their claims to pro- "tection."

Besides these clauses, there are others, from 49 to 54 inclusive, which relate to a "church establishment in India. A bishop and "three archdeacons to be appointed; their salaries are specified; "the episcopal jurisdiction is to be limited by letters patent from "the king; pensions to be allowed after fifteen years' service." Of the bishops who have been appointed since the passing of this act, four, viz. *Middleton*, *Heber*, *James*, and *Turner*, have been already brought by the climate of India to a premature grave.—Ed.

adherence to the religious system of their forefathers, is readily admitted; nor would any event give more serious concern to the writer of this address, than an interference with that right of private judgment which he deems an inalienable prerogative of human nature. But, for a christian nation to give a decided preference to polytheism and idolatry, by prohibiting the dissemination of a purer faith, and thus employ its powers in suppressing the truth, and prolonging the existence of the most degrading and deplorable superstitions, is a line of conduct equally repugnant to the dictates of religion, and the maxims of sound policy. To oppose by force the propagation of revealed truth, from any worldly considerations whatever, is such a sacrifice of right to expediency, as can be justified on no principles but what will lead to the subversion of all morality and religion.

If christianity be a communication from heaven, to oppose its extension is *to fight against God;* an impiety which, under every possible combination of circumstances, must expect a severe rebuke; but the guilt of which is inconceivably aggravated, when the opposition proceeds from the professors of that very religion. We have no example in the history of the world of such a conduct; we have no precedent of a people prohibiting the propagation of their own faith; a species of intolerance exposed not only to the objections which lie in common against all restraints upon conscience, but to a train of absurdities peculiar to itself; at the

same time that it imposes a character of meanness on the ruling powers, by the virtual confession it includes, that they have either no religion, or a religion of which they are ashamed. As the equality of all religions, the distinguishing tenet of deism, is alike repugnant to the dictates of reason, and the oracles of truth, so it is ill calculated to conciliate the esteem of eastern nations, on whom it can have no other effect than to desecrate the British name, by depriving it of the veneration which nature, unsophisticated by impiety, has inseparably connected with sentiments of religious belief. Powerfully impressed as they are with religious principles and prejudices, however erroneous, we can scarcely adopt a more effectual expedient for securing their contempt and abhorrence than an avowed indifference to whatever concerns that momentous subject.

It is an undeniable fact, that no persons have been so popular in India, as the men who have exerted themselves with the most steady and persevering zeal in the dissemination of christian principles; of which we have a striking example in the excellent Schwartz, for many years a missionary on the coast of Coromandel, who, by his wise and benevolent conduct, rendered, on various occasions, the most essential service to the British interests, and became the object of the enthusiastic attachment of the natives.*

* See the Reports of the Society at Bartlett's Buildings, (now Lincoln's Inn Fields,) for promoting Christian Knowledge.

The attempt to propagate christianity in India is not a new experiment; it has been now tried for more than a century: it received the warmest support of George the First, of illustrious memory, as well as of the then Archbishop of Canterbury; and in the hands of Ziegenbalgius, and his successors, was crowned with distinguished success.* Similar attempts have been more recently made in Bengal, and the adjacent provinces; and several christian societies have been planted by the labours of missionaries in those parts of India. It deserves particular attention, that no inconvenience, not even the slightest, has arisen from these enterprises; and that whatever agitation has been witnessed among the natives at different times, the propagation of christianity has never been the cause, or even the pretext. When intelligence of the insurrection of Vellore reached England, there were not wanting persons who endeavoured to ascribe it to the jealousy and uneasiness excited by the efforts of missionaries; but no attempt could be more unsuccessful, since, in the course of a most accurate investigation of the circumstances connected with that event, we have it, on the authority of Lord Teignmouth, that not even the name of a missionary was mentioned. It arose from causes totally distinct. Thus have we the experience of more than a century to justify the conclusion, that

* See the excellent Letters from his Majesty and the Archbishop, addressed to Ziegenbalgius, in Buchanan's Ecclesiastical Researches.

nothing is to be feared for the tranquillity of India from the operations of missionaries, subject, as they must ever be, to the control of the constituted authorities.

The number of natives who profess christianity is not small nor inconsiderable. The disciples of Schwartz and his successors on the eastern side of the peninsula amount to fifty thousand; and the Syrian christians, on the coast of Malabar, to several hundred thousands; the greater part of them converted from the Bramins, and the higher classes. They have subsisted there from the fifth century, are in possession of one hundred and nineteen churches, some of them sumptuous and splendid edifices; and their superior elevation of character and purity of manners are attested, on the most respectable authority, to be such as the possession of the christian faith might be expected to inspire.* In addition to this, translations of the New Testament, in almost all the vernacular dialects of India, have been recently circulated, and a considerable number of the natives are assiduously and constantly employed in preaching the gospel; so that it is too late to think of checking its career: the possession it has taken of the public mind will necessarily render all such attempts impracticable. The only question which remains to be decided is, whether its further propagation shall be left solely in the hands of natives, or whether

* See the interesting narrative of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian christians, in his Ecclesiastical Researches.

intelligent and respectable Europeans who come more immediately into contact with the British government, and in whose prudence and experience greater confidence may be reposed, shall be allowed to superintend its movements. The good seed having struck its root too deep ever to be extirpated, the only alternative is, either to leave it to its spontaneous growth, aided by the labour of Hindoos, or to place it under a more skilful and enlightened cultivation.

Though strangers to the theory, the inhabitants of Hindostan have been long familiarized to the practice, of toleration. In no part of the world is there a greater variety of sects, or more contrariety in the modes of religious belief, subsisting without the slightest disturbance; even the grand division of the natives into Hindoos and Mahometans has continued for ages, without interruption to the public harmony.

But if nothing is to be feared from the dissemination of christian principles in India, the advantages resulting from it, whether we consult the interest of the natives, or our own, are too obvious to require to be enumerated, and too important to be overlooked. With respect to its aspect on the natives, will it be contended that a more powerful instrument can be devised for meliorating and raising their character, than grafting upon it the principles of our holy religion, which, wherever it prevails, never fails to perfect whatever is good, and to correct whatever is evil, in the human

constitution, and to which Europe is chiefly indebted for those enlightened views, and that high sense of probity and honour, which distinguish it so advantageously in a comparison with Asiatic nations? The prevalence of christianity every where marks the boundary which separates the civilized from the barbarous or semi-barbarous parts of the world; let but this boundary be extended, and the country included within its limits may be considered as redeemed from the waste, and prepared to receive the precious seeds of civilization and improvement. Independently of eternal prospects, it may be safely affirmed that polytheism and idolatry draw after them such a train of absurd and dismal consequences, as to be quite incompatible with the due expansion of the human intellect, and necessarily to prevent the operations of reason from reaching their maturity and perfection. Wherever christianity prevails, mankind are uniformly progressive; it communicates that just manner of thinking upon the most important subjects, which, extending its influence thence to every department of speculative and moral truth, inspires a freedom of inquiry, and an elevation of sentiment, which raise the disciples of revelation immeasurably above the level of unassisted nature.

The Hindoo superstition is characterized by a puerile extravagance of conception, as hostile to the cultivation of reason, as the enormity of its practices is revolting to humanity. It oppresses the former by its gigantic absurdities; it extin-

guishes the latter by the cruelty of its rites. The annual destruction of female infants in Guzerat and Kutch is estimated at fifteen or twenty thousand.* Till lately, it had been the custom, from time immemorial, to immolate, at the island of Saugor, and at other places esteemed holy, on the banks of the Ganges, human victims, or to destroy them by sharks. From a late investigation, it appears that the number of women who sacrifice themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands, within thirty miles of Calcutta, is, on an average, upwards of two hundred, annually.† A multitude of courtezans are uniformly attached to the principal temples, and the most obscene symbols exhibited to inflame the passions of their votaries.‡

While the history of all times and nations evinces the inseparable alliance of impurity and cruelty with the worship of idols, is it consistent with the dictates of humanity, not merely to witness these enormities without attempting to correct them, but to oppose the communication of the only remedy which is capable of effecting a cure?

The base venality, together with the spirit of artifice and intrigue, which distinguish the natives of Hindostan, have rendered it the theatre of perpetual revolutions, robbed its native governments

* See Moore's Hindoo Infanticide.

† See Buchanan's Memoir, p. 96, Appendix. In a letter lately received from Dr. Carey, he estimates the whole number of women annually sacrificed throughout India at ten thousand.

‡ See Sonnerat's Voyage aux Indes et à la Chine, p. 219.

of every principle of stability, and rendered poisonings, assassinations, and treachery, expedients so constantly resorted to by the parties in conflict, that it is impossible to peruse its history without shuddering. To affirm that there is nothing in their superstitions calculated to correct these vices, is saying little, when, in fact, they derive a powerful sanction from the maxims of their religion, and from the character of their gods. There is not one of their deities portrayed in their Shasters whose moral character is tolerably correct. How much christianity is wanted to exalt the sentiments, and purify the principles, of this corrupt and effeminate race, is too obvious to need to be insisted on.

That their conversion is practicable, is ascertained beyond controversy by the success which has already attended the experiment; that no apprehensions are to be entertained for the permanence of British power, in consequence of the attempt, is manifest from experience; that to consult the welfare of the subject is the first duty of the sovereign, and the chief distinction betwixt the exercise of legitimate authority and the operation of lawless tyranny, will not be disputed in an enlightened age; and that the christian religion is the greatest blessing we have received, the most precious boon we can bestow, none but infidels will deny. It surely will not be asserted, that we are under less obligation to communicate a good, because that good may be traced to the immediate

interposition of Heaven, or because it contains the seed and germ of eternal felicity. He who believes the Bible, must know that the heathen are to be given to Christ for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, and that therefore to *forbid his being preached to the Gentiles that they may be saved,* is an attempt to contravene the purposes of the Most High, equally impotent and presumptuous. *Let the potsherds strive against the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him who striveth with his Maker.* Such conduct, persevered in, must infallibly draw down the judgements of God on the people to whose infatuated counsels it is to be ascribed. Whoever considers the aspect of the times, must be invincibly prejudiced not to discern the symptoms of a peculiar crisis, the distinguishing features of which are, the rapid subversion of human institutions, and the advancement of the kingdom of God. *The stone cut out without hands has already fallen upon the image, and made it like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor:* the next event we are to look for in the order of Providence, is its enlarging itself, *till it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.* If there ever was a period when the propagation of the true religion might be resisted with impunity, that period is past; and the Master of the universe is now addressing the greatest potentates in the language of an ancient oracle:— *Be wise now, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* Encompassed as we are with the awful

tokens of a presiding and avenging Providence, dissolving the fabrics of human wisdom, extinguishing the most ancient dynasties, and tearing up kingdoms by their roots, it would be the height of infatuation any longer to oppose the reign of God, whose purposes will pursue their career, in spite of the efforts of human policy, which must either yield their cooperation, or be broken by its force.

All that is desired, on this occasion, is simply that the Word of God may be permitted to have free course. Whether it be consistent with sound policy for the British government to employ any part of its resources in aid of the cause of christianity in India, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss, while its friends confine their views to a simple toleration, and request merely that its teachers may not be harassed or impeded in their attempts to communicate instruction to the natives. Before such a liberty can be withheld, the principles of toleration must be abandoned; nor will it be practicable to withhold it without exciting a sanguinary persecution, where men are to be found who will eagerly embrace the crown of martyrdom rather than relinquish the performance of what appears to them a high and awful duty. And what a spectacle will it exhibit, for a christian government to employ force in the *support* of idolatry, and the *suppression* of truth!

Instead of dwelling on the necessary effects of such a measure, let us consider for a moment the

beneficial consequences likely to result from an opposite mode of conduct. On that improvement of character which the cordial reception of revealed truth cannot fail to operate, it will be easy to graft some of the best habits and institutions of European nations, advancing gradually through an interminable series of social order and happiness. Under the fostering hand of religion, reason will develope her resources, and philosophy mature her fruits. Nor will the advantages accruing to the British interests, from a change so salutary, be less certain, or less important. The possession of the same faith will occasion such an approximation of the habits and sentiments of the natives to our own, as will render the union firm, by rendering it cordial. While a total opposition in their views on the most important points subsists betwixt the sovereign and the subjects;—while objects adored by the one are held in contempt and abhorrence by the other; they may be artificially connected, but it is impossible they should be united: it is rather a juxta-position of inanimate parts, than a union of minds. In such a situation the social tie wants that cementing principle which is requisite to give it strength and stability: it is a strained and unnatural position, in which things are held contrary to their native bent; in which authority is upheld merely by force, without deriving support from that sympathy of congenial sentiment which forms its truest basis. Hence the precarious tenure by which European states

have successively held dominion in India, where all has been submitted to the arbitration of the sword; where the moment force has been withdrawn or relaxed, authority has ceased, and each, in its turn, has gained a transient ascendency, none a firm and tranquil possession.

In order to obviate the mischiefs arising from such a state of things, it is extremely desirable, providing it be practicable, to impart to our subjects in the East some principle which shall draw them into closer contact with the ruling power; and what principle equally operative and efficient with the possession of a common religion? Though the universal diffusion of christianity over India will probably be a work of time, its influence in strengthening the social compact, by augmenting the attachment of the natives, will be uniformly progressive; and while external tranquillity is secured, by the superiority of our policy and our arms, we shall every year be making our way into their hearts: we shall be establishing an interior dominion, and may confidently reckon on the unshaken fidelity of every christian convert. This is not mere conjecture: for in all the trying vicissitudes experienced by the British interests in India, the Hindoo christians have invariably approved themselves our firmest friends and abettors.

Though the writer of this address is afraid of being tedious, there is another consideration connected with the present subject, which he deems of too much importance not to be mentioned. The

possession of India, it is well known, is an object to which our enemies are looking with eager desire, accompanied with jealousy at that splendour which the vastness of our oriental empire confers on the British name and character. No efforts will they deem too great, no sacrifices too expensive, to rob us of so bright a jewel. What events may arise hereafter to facilitate the accomplishment of their wishes, it is beyond the power of human sagacity to conjecture: one thing is certain, that nothing will oppose a more formidable obstacle to their designs than the diffusion of christianity. They who have received that inestimable blessing, will infallibly cling with ardour to the people to whom they are indebted for it. They will feel more than a natural affection to the country which has opened to them the prospect of immortality, and nourished them with the bread of life. In all the struggles to retain or to acquire dominion in the East, the christian portion of the population will, to a man, be the zealous partizans of Great Britain; a firm and immovable band, whose devoted attachment will in some measure compensate for their inferiority of number. In this species of policy, too, in this most unexceptionable mode of conciliating esteem, we shall have nothing to apprehend from the intrigues of our rivals, who are equally indisposed and disqualified to engage in such an enterprise.

If we consider what may be the probable intention of Providence in opening so extensive a

communication betwixt Europe and the most ancient seats of idolatry, and more especially of subjecting such immense territories in the East to the British arms, we can conceive no end more worthy of the Deity in these momentous changes, than to facilitate the propagation of true religion.

Our acquisition of power there has been so rapid, so extensive, and so disproportioned to the limits of our native empire, that there are few events in which the interposition of Providence may be more distinctly traced. From the possession of a few forts in different parts of the coast, which we were permitted to erect for the protection of our commerce, we have risen, in the course of less than half a century, to a summit of power, whence we exert a direct dominion over fifty millions, and a paramount influence over a hundred millions of men. By an astonishing train of events, a large portion of the population of the oriental world has been subjected to the control of an island placed in the extremities of the west of Europe. Kingdoms have fallen after kingdoms, and provinces after provinces, with a rapidity which resembles the incidents of a romance, rather than the accustomed order of political events. It is remarkable, too, that this career of conquest has uniformly directed its steps towards those parts of the earth, and to those only, which are the primeval seats of pagan idolatry; forming an intimate connexion betwixt the most enlightened of christian nations, and the victims of the most inveterate and deplorable system

of superstition mankind have ever witnessed. As we must be blind not to discern the finger of God in these transactions, it behoves us to consider for what purposes we are lifted to so high a pre-eminence.

It is certainly not to be ascribed to a blind predilection, which aims at no other object than to gratify ambition, by extending the power, and augmenting the grandeur of Great Britain; a motive too puerile to satisfy the requisitions of human reason, much more to limit the views of an eternal mind.

The possession of sovereignty over extensive kingdoms is a sacred trust, for which nations are not less responsible than individuals, a delegation from the supreme fountain of power; and as the unalterable laws of nature forbid us to confound men with things, or to forget the reciprocal obligations subsisting betwixt the sovereign and the subject, we can scarcely be guilty of a greater crime than to consider the latter as merely subservient to the interests of the former. Every individual of the immense population subjected to our sway, has claims on our justice and benevolence which we cannot with impunity neglect: the wants and sufferings of every individual utter a voice which goes to the heart of humanity. In return for their allegiance we owe them protection and instruction, together with every effort to meliorate their condition and improve their character. It is but fair to acknowledge that we have not been wholly

insensible to these claims, and that the extension of our power has been hitherto highly beneficial. But why, in the series of improvements, has christianity been neglected? Why has the communication of the greatest good we have to bestow been hitherto fettered and restrained; and while every modification of idolatry, not excepting the bloody and obscene orgies of Juggernaut, has received support, has every attempt to instruct the natives in the things which belong to their peace been suppressed? It will surely appear surprising to posterity, that a nation, glorying in the purity of its faith as its highest distinction, should suffer its transactions in the East to be characterized by a spirit of infidelity, as though it were imagined the foundations of empire could be laid only in apostasy and impiety; at a moment, too, when Europe, convulsed to its centre, beholds these frantic erections swept with the besom of destruction. Their astonishment will be the more excited, when they compare our conduct in this instance with the unprecedented exertions we are making for the diffusion of religious knowledge in other directions; with the operations of the Bible Society, which, formed for the sole purpose of conveying the oracles of God to all quarters, has risen to an importance that entitles it to be regarded as a national concern; in which statesmen, nobles, and prelates, have enrolled their names, emulous of the honour of advancing to the utmost the noble design of the institution; with the Bartlett's

Buildings Society, employed for upwards of a century in attempts to convert the natives of Hindostan, which includes in the list of its members every bishop, and every dignified ecclesiastic in the realm; with the numerous translations going on in all the dialects of the East, to which the learned, both in Europe and in Asia, are looking with eager expectation. When posterity shall compare the conduct we are reprobating, with these facts, how great their astonishment to find the piety of the nation has suffered itself to lie prostrate at the feet of a few individuals, the open or disguised enemies of the faith of Jesus!

It is impossible, in connexion with the circumstances to which we have adverted, to mistake the real sentiments of the British people, or not to perceive that the illustrious associations already mentioned are entitled, on a question of this nature, to be considered as its genuine and legitimate organ.

It ought never to be forgotten, in the consideration of this subject, that it is inseparably connected with liberty of conscience. Religious toleration implies not merely the freedom of thought, which no human power can restrain, and which equally subsists under the most tyrannical and the most enlightened governments; it comprehends, also, the freedom of communication, and the right of discussion, within the limits of sober and dispassionate argument. He who is impressed with a conviction of the importance of the Christian

verities, it is reasonable to suppose, will be anxious to communicate them; he will probably feel as St. Paul did in a similar situation, whose spirit was stirred within him when he beheld Athens wholly given up to idolatry: he may be touched with so strong a commiseration for the victims of religious imposture, and so powerful a sense of the duty of attempting to correct it, as to be ready to adopt the language employed on another occasion:—"We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

None but the determined enemy of truth and decency will deny that such a state of mind is possible, or that it is more allied to virtue than to vice. If, at this juncture, a superior power interposes, and says, You shall not impart your conviction, however strong; you shall not attempt to dispel delusions the most gross, or correct enormities the most flagrant, though no other means are thought of but calm expostulation and argument: in what, I would ask, does such an interference differ from persecution? Here is conscience on one side, an enlightened conscience, as all christians must confess, and force on the other; which is precisely the position in which things are placed by every instance of persecution. If christianity was ever persecuted; if the martyrologies of all times and nations are not to be exploded as mere fiction and romance; this is persecution, and persecution of a most portentous character, being directed, in support of a system

we detest, against the religion by which we expect to be saved. Here are a people, indignant posterity will exclaim, who profess subjection to the Saviour of the world, and hold in their hands the oracles which foretell the universal extension of his dominion, who yet make it a crime to breathe his name in pagan lands, and employ their power to fence out the scene of his future triumphs, and render it, as far as possible, inaccessible to his religion. With what efficacious sincerity, and edifying fervour, must this people have prayed, "Thy kingdom come!" Admirable successors of the Constantines and the Charlemagnes of a former age! Faithful stewards of the manifold gifts of God!

When the parallel betwixt the conduct of modern missionaries and the first preachers of the gospel is insisted on; it is usual to attempt to annul the conclusion deduced from the comparison, by remarking that the latter were possessed of miraculous powers, to which the former make no pretensions. That this circumstance occasions a real disparity in the means of ensuring success, will be readily acknowledged; but that it makes any difference whatever in the right of imparting instruction, will not hastily be conceded. Had such supernatural interpositions never accompanied the publication of the gospel, it had wanted its credentials, and been essentially defective in the proof of its divine origination. It was necessary for a new dispensation, when first ushered into the world, to

be accompanied with a direct appeal to the senses, with the visible signatures of a divine hand; and it is the glory of our holy religion to have possessed them in a variety and splendour that astonished mankind, and laid a foundation for the faith and obedience of all succeeding ages. At its *entrance,* such an economy was requisite to prepare the way. But when these miraculous occurrences, after enduring the severest scrutiny, under circumstances the most favourable to investigation, were committed to writing, and formed a compact body of external evidences; when the supernatural origin of the christian faith had taken its place amongst the most indubitable of recorded facts, it was no longer necessary to be continually repeating the same proofs; nor consistent with the majesty of heaven, to be ever laying the foundation afresh. It was time to assume the truth of religion as a thing proved.

As we were none of us eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought in the primitive ages, but rest our belief on historical documents, it is not impossible, as far as the truth of christianity is concerned, to lay open to pagans the sources of our conviction, and by that means to place them in nearly the same situation with ourselves; to say nothing of that internal evidence which *commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* This is actually the mode in which the light of Revelation has been chiefly diffused since the cessation of miraculous gifts; which, in the opinion

of some, terminated with the apostles, in the judgement of others, were continued through the first three centuries, but are universally allowed to have ceased long before the conversion of the northern and western parts of Europe. Did the disciples of St. Columba, who spread christianity through the German provinces on the Baltic, through the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, owe their success to miraculous powers? Did St. Austin and his associates, who laid the foundations of the religious establishments in England, make such pretensions?

To demand miracles in order to justify the propagation of christianity in pagan countries, is to attribute to it a state of perpetual weakness and pupilage: it is to cancel all that is past, to accuse the most illustrious missionaries of enthusiasm, and the faith of our forefathers of folly and credulity. The principle we are attempting to expose, not content with inflicting a stigma on a particular sect or party, involves the whole christian community established in these realms, in the foul reproach of being the illegitimate offspring of fanaticism, or imposture. It is only necessary for us to place ourselves in imagination at that period when the foundation of the church was laid in this and in other European countries, to perceive that the same objections which are made to the present efforts of missionaries, apply with equal force to those that are past. They who first exhibited the mystery of the cross to the view of our rude

ancestors, were equally destitute of miraculous powers with ourselves. But they felt the power of the world to come; they were deeply impressed with the dignity and excellence of the christian dispensation, and touched with a passionate regard for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. These were the motives which impelled them forward; these the weapons of their warfare. The ridicule attempted to be poured on men of the same principles and character, engaged in the same object, is, in fact, reflected on these their predecessors, and is precisely a repetition of the conduct of the impenitent Jews, who honoured the memory, and built the sepulchres of departed, while they were imbuing their hands in the blood of living, prophets. We collect, with eager veneration, the names and achievements of the first heralds of the gospel; we dwell with exultation on the heroic fortitude they displayed in encountering the opposition of fierce barbarians, amidst their efforts to reclaim them from a sanguinary superstition, and to imbue their minds with the principles of an enlightened piety. We look up to them as to a superior order of beings, and in the character of the instructors of mankind in the sublimest lessons, entitled to a distinction above all Greek, above all Roman fame; yet, with ineffable absurdity, and a most contemptible littleness of mind, if it please Providence, at distant intervals, to raise up a few congenial spirits, we are prepared to treat them with levity and scorn. It is the

misfortune of some men to labour under an incapacity of discerning living worth;—a sort of moral virtuosi, who form their estimate of characters, as the antiquarian of coins, by the rust of antiquity.

> "Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
> Infra se positas: extinctus amabitur idem."
>
> *Horace.*

I would not be understood, in the remarks made on this part of the subject, to explode the expectation of the renewal of miraculous agency; which some of the most able divines have unquestionably formed, from a perusal of the prophetic oracles. The inference I would wish to establish is simply this, that we are not justified in neglecting the means of propagating the truth we already possess, by the absence of higher succour; and that it would ill become the christian world to abandon the attempts to convert the inhabitants of pagan countries, in deference to the clamours of men, who demand miracles merely because they believe they will not be vouchsafed, and decry the ordinary methods of procedure, because they are within our reach, and have already been crowned with success. To such the language of the prophet Amos may be addressed with propriety:—*Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.* Chap. v. 18.

AN

APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FUND.

[PUBLISHED IN 1819.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

IMPRESSED as the writer of these pages has long been with the critical state of the stocking manufactory, and the intolerable evils resulting from a progressive depression of wages, he could not refrain from communicating his sentiments on this most interesting subject. He is aware of his inability to discuss it with that precision and force which superior talents might command. His only apology is, that he has *done what he could.* His reason for suppressing his name, is simply, that while it might possibly create prejudice in some quarters, he is not aware that it would bestow additional weight in any.

AN APPEAL.

It is with the highest satisfaction I perceive that the wretched state of the labouring mechanics in Liecestershire has at length arrested the attention, and drawn forth the liberality of a discerning public. But while we rejoice to see such a feeling awakened, we must be permitted to express our surprise and concern at the very scanty and penurious contribution it has hitherto produced. After witnessing such an unexampled depression in the remuneration of labour as to place the means of subsistence totally out of the reach of the industrious poor, when the only alternative presented, is that of effective aid afforded by the more opulent, or the total ruin and extinction of the labouring classes, it was natural to expect that the extent and magnitude of the exertion would bear some proportion to the greatness of the object, and the exigence of the case. That this expectation is, as yet, far from being realized, requires no proof; nor will it be possible to prevent the recurrence of that intolerable state of suffering which we have recently witnessed, without more extensive and vigorous efforts.

It is frequently asserted, we are aware, that the rate of wages, like every other article, should be left to find its own level, and that all attempts at artificial regulation, either by voluntary association, or legal enactment, is repugnant to the true principles of political economy. That commerce ought to be left to its native operation, to a much greater extent than it is, we have learned from the highest authority; nor is it proposed to implore the interference of legislature in aid of our present object. But there is a peculiarity in the case of manual labour to which we suspect the persons who urge this objection have not attended.

When the price of a particular commodity sinks so low as not to produce the ordinary profits of stock, a part or the whole of the capital is withdrawn; a less quantity is produced in proportion to the diminution of the demand, in consequence of which, the price rises to its former level. Thus the irregularity corrects itself, and little or no permanent mischief ensues. But the situation of the labourer is widely different; he has no other article to dispose of besides his personal industry and skill, on which he depends for his subsistence from day to day, nor can he, without being reduced to immediate distress, withhold them from the market, or even diminish their exertion to any considerable degree. The only commodity he has to part with is of such a nature, that it will not permit him to adjust the supply to the demand. He must instantly offer it to sale at whatever price it will

fetch, or suffer all the agonies of want. Hence this is the kind of property of all others the most defenceless, and which most needs protection. That the rate of wages has a tendency to keep pace with the price of the necessaries of life is undeniable, but from the cause we have now mentioned it is long before that tendency becomes effective; the labourer and the mechanic are the *last* who experience the beneficial effect of an elevation in prices.

But, admitting the objection to which we have adverted to be more weighty than it is, where is the equity of urging it in opposition to the claims of the labouring classes, while it is treated with the utmost neglect on other occasions? What is the object, let me ask, of the laws for the regulation of trade, which form so large a part of our acts of parliament, but to secure to certain descriptions of the community a higher price for the respective commodities which they produce, and thus to direct the application of capital to a specific object? What is the design, the avowed object at least, of the corn bill, but to encourage agriculture, by securing a higher price for its productions than they could command, were they exposed to the effects of foreign competition? What is the design of the additional duty lately imposed on foreign wool, but to bestow an artificial elevation on the price of that article, as a means of promoting its domestic growth? and why so extensive a list of prohibitory statutes, except they are

intended to encourage our home manufactures, by securing to them a higher price? Not to multiply words on so plain a subject, suffice it to remark that all laws and regulations of the legislature respecting trade and agriculture, with the exception of such as immediately relate to revenue, have for their immediate object the modification of price; it is by that means, and that alone, that they furnish encouragement to that species of productive industry, which it is deemed expedient to favour. Hence it is evident that the vaunted maxim of leaving every kind of production and labour to find its own level is not adhered to; that it has always been violated, in this country, from the remotest times. An adherence to it would create a total revolution in our mercantile system, and while it is trampled under foot every day, it just commands a sufficient degree of theoretic assent, to render it, in the hands of the artful and designing, a *bugbear* to deter the humane from rendering effectual assistance to the distressed and laborious part of the community. But what, let me once more ask, what reason can be assigned for leaving this class unprotected, the most helpless in society, from the cause already specified; while the agricultural, the manufacturing, and the mercantile interests, are shielded, with jealous attention, by a multitude of legal provisions?

Why a philosophical theory, which is violated with impunity every moment, should then only be deemed sacred when it stands opposed to the

claims of a starving and industrious population we are at a loss to conjecture. Let it be remembered, however, that an application to the legislature forms no part of the present plan; although, if every other expedient should fail, we see no reason why its aid should not be exerted in favour of the Leicestershire frame-work knitters, as well as of the Spitalfields weavers, who were, a few years ago, effectually relieved by the establishment of a *minimum*,* with the entire approbation of the principal manufacturers. The excellent Mr. Wilberforce had a principal share in procuring that regulation; nor is it to be doubted, that, in conjunction with other humane and enlightened senators, he would be ready to exert, if necessary, the same efforts for the mitigation of similar distress.

The measure now intended is of a less bold and hazardous character. It is proposed simply by means of voluntary contribution to afford a subsistence, scanty it will probably be at the best, to that portion of the labouring class who are destitute of employment, that they may not be compelled to offer their labour for next to nothing, and thus reduce the general rate of wages to that scale of depression which has been already productive of such calamitous effects. On the present system, those who are thrown out of employment are tempted to offer their service for a remuneration totally inadequate to their wants. But a material inequality of wages for the same quantity of work

* The *lowest* rate at which labour should be paid for.

is unnatural, and therefore cannot be permanent; the consequence is, that the wages of all the workmen are soon reduced to the rate at which the first hands are engaged. Thus a small surplus of labour, beyond what the state of the demand requires, becomes an engine for effecting a deep and universal depression; and the misery of a few, instead of exciting an effort for their relief, becomes the signal for a more extended infliction of the same calamity. To this evil no conceivable remedy, short of legislative interference, can be applied, except the creation of a fund capable of supplying the more pressing necessities of those whom the vicissitudes of trade may deprive of employment. This is the only expedient that furnishes the faintest prospect of giving permanence and stability to the statement to which the principal manufacturers have agreed; and on the vigour with which it is carried into effect depends our only chance of obviating the recurrence, with fresh aggravation, of the distress we have lately witnessed.

The benefits resulting from the successful operation of the measure we are recommending will not be confined to its immediate objects, it will extend its influence to every class of the community; and the alleviation which it will afford to the almost insupportable burthen of the poor-rates will be of eminent advantage to the parishes. Suppose in a particular parish a hundred frames at work, and each of the frame-work knitters earns, clear of all

deductions, ten shillings a week instead of six, that parish is benefited to the amount of a thousand pounds; and, considering the utter inadequacy of the former wages to procure the necessaries of life, the alteration will be nearly equivalent to an *annual* donation of a thousand pounds to the parochial treasure. That it is the interest of the manufacturing villages to exert themselves to the utmost in perpetuating the present statement, is an inference which must force itself on the attention of the most careless observer; and nothing but the most infatuated preference of the present to the future, can prevent them from giving to the fund a liberal support. Tradesmen of every description are deeply interested in the success of the present measure, since the permanent rise of wages will increase the power of purchase, and give a new impulse to every species of trade. Supposing the number engaged in all the various departments of the stocking manufactory to amount to thirty thousand, no extravagant computation, and little less than three hundred thousand pounds, in addition to the present sum, will annually find its way into the market; the agriculturist will find his account in the increased demand for raw produce, the manufacturer and the dealer, both wholesale and retail, in a more extended purchase of wrought goods. The landed proprietor will also be essentially benefited; for who does not know that the value of land must always bear a certain proportion to the demand for manufactures, and to the

general diffusion of prosperity? Thus all orders will reap the advantage of a change of system.

On a subject so immediately connected with the claims of humanity, it is, surely, not too much to expect, that nothing more will be necessary to inspire an aversion to the system recently adopted, than a recollection of its actual effect in the ruin and prostration of the industrious mechanic. That man is little to be envied whose enjoyments are not essentially embittered by the prospect of surfounding misery, who daily beholds, with untroubled composure, innumerable countenances clouded with dejection and despair. Were the state of suffering with which we have long been familiar removed from immediate observation, we could scarcely hear of it without agitation; how much more afflicting to be placed in the midst of it, to feel it pressing on our senses in all directions, without the power of contributing any thing to its mitigation and relief, beyond a barren and impotent commiseration! Is there no hazard of contracting a fatal induration by a daily familiarity with indigence which we cannot alleviate, with scenes of woe we can neither remove nor diminish? To *go* into the house of mourning is good, since it is adapted to impress salutary lessons; but to *dwell* in a situation where every house is become such, is a state to which nothing but utter insensibility can be reconciled.

There are, however, higher, if not more affecting, considerations connected with the present subject.

If the evil which we have now the means of escaping should return, it will be in vain for us to flatter ourselves with a long duration of tranquillity; a starving must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burthen. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigour of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsistence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry, will take an unnatural and destructive direction?

The manufacture of this county is so fortunately circumstanced in being exempted from foreign interference and competition, that nothing can materially injure it except its internal mismanagement. In the article of hosiery we possess a monopoly. While cotton thread is allowed to be exported, and to give birth to numerous foreign establishments, the kinds of wool necessary for our manufacture are prohibited from going abroad. We have the exclusive command of the market, and are under no necessity of having recourse to a reduction of price in order to defeat the competition of foreign

manufacturers. All is in our own power; and if a spirit of miserable and short-sighted rivalry is suffered to depress the hire, and extinguish the comforts of the labouring mechanic, it is the odious spectacle of a family quarrelling amongst themselves. Secured from external injury, and less affected by the vicissitudes of war and peace than perhaps any other branch of commerce, because it is concerned in an article of the first necessity; those who are employed in it have only to remain true to themselves, and they may bid defiance to every effort of hostility. "If ye bite and devour," says holy writ, "see that ye are not consumed one of another." What can be more detestable than to see a system pursued which can have no other possible termination or object than the sacrifice of the happiness of the many to a few, an inconceivable few, whose prosperity is cemented by the tears of a distressed and ruined population!

In order to give employment to those who are thrown out of work, and to lighten the poor-rates, some parishes have established manufactories of their own. While the system of depression continued, it was natural to have recourse to an expedient which accomplished its immediate object. But if it is proposed to give perpetuity to the present statement, that practice must be abandoned. The parishes can afford to dispose of their goods at little or no profit: but the regular manufacturers, it is natural to expect, will not submit to be undersold by a class of persons whom they cannot

but regard as intruders: hence arises a new source of competition, and a consequent depression of wages. It is in vain to expect that the manufacturer will adhere to a liberal statement of wages while he is exposed to a rivalry conducted upon unequal terms.

It is surely not too much to hope, that the good sense of parishes will prompt them to put a speedy end to this practice, and that no selfish calculation of local or immediate advantage will tempt them to support a system pregnant with extensive mischief.

It gives the writer sincere concern to hear that there are even some frame-work knitters themselves so blind to their own interest as to refuse to contribute to the general fund. With men who are resolved to shut their eyes on consequences, and are unwilling to sacrifice the smallest immediate, to the greatest future advantage, it is in vain to reason, since they have renounced the prerogative of thinking beings. As the frame-work knitters are the description of persons immediately interested, it is they who must give the first impulse. It is in vain for those to look for help who are unwilling to help themselves; and when so small a portion of their earnings is sufficient, with the assistance of a generous public, to secure them from the recurrence of recent sufferings, it is not in the power of words to express the folly which hesitates to make the necessary sacrifice. The whole system of life is a series of compromises

with unavoidable evil, in which material inconveniences are endured for the acquisition of future good: and he who aspires to enjoyments unaccompanied by the necessity of self-denial and sacrifice, will not retain them long. Such, also, is the power of combination, that, small as is the sum which each individual is called to disburse, the amount of numerous contributions will lay a solid foundation for future prosperity, by protecting them from the encroachments of unfeeling rapacity.

'It is asserted there are some manufacturers who have absolutely prohibited their workmen from contributing their quota to the fund. For the honour of human nature, we hope the report is unfounded. We are reluctant to suppose there can be found, in a christian country, men so callous to the sentiments of humanity, as to interdict the means of self-preservation, or of temper so despotic as to attempt to infringe on the essential right of every reasonable being to consult his interest by providing for future contingencies. Let it suffice to have refused their aid to their fellow-creatures while struggling in the waves, without driving them back when they have gained the shore. We earnestly recommend the periodical publication of a correct list of the contributors and the non-contributors, together with the reasons assigned for the conduct of the latter, that blame may be imputed only where it is due, and the patrons of oppression (if such there be) may be made amenable to the tribunal of public opinion.

From a partial view of the magnitude of the object before us, and of the extent of the mischief which requires to be remedied, those districts which are not the seat of manufacture, have manifested a reluctance to contribute; a narrow and mistaken policy, which deserves the severest reprobation. Whether the workmen in the principal manufacture of a populous county sink into wretchedness and beggary, or are maintained in a state of comfort, can never be an uninteresting circumstance to any part of its inhabitants. Humanity apart, it requires but little attention to perceive that as the ability to purchase, and, consequently, the extent of purchasers, is regulated, not by the wants, but by the pecuniary resources of the buyer, to those who have any thing to dispose of, the poverty of their customers must necessarily be injurious. But the frame-work knitters and their families constitute the most numerous class of consumers in the county, and the quantity of their consumption must be proportioned to the extent of their earnings. The circulation of money depends as much on the wages of labour, as on the profits of stock; and if thirty thousand persons rise from abject poverty to a capacity of commanding a larger share of the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life, the money which procures them will flow into every channel, so as to benefit alike the tradesman, the agriculturist, and the landed proprietor. The infusion of a new *pabulum* of life into the extremities, will strengthen and invigorate the whole body.

Let not the inhabitants of those towns and villages where no manufacture is carried on, suffer themselves to be deluded into false security, and because they hear not the sound of the knitting frame, nor behold its productions spread before their eyes, flatter themselves with the hope of impunity in the midst of surrounding distress. The ties of civil society are too close and intricate, the reciprocal action of its respective parts too great, to admit of a local circumscription of calamity. The natural effect of a remarkable depression in the staple manufacture of a county is to spread commercial embarrassment and distress throughout the whole, of which we have already had sufficient experience in the difficulties under which trade, of every description, has laboured, in consequence of the paucity of money and the diminution of demand. The tradesman, it is true, feels the effect in its first stage of operation, the agriculturist in the next, in a diminished consumption of his raw produce.

In the moral system, it is a part of the wise arrangements of Providence, that no member shall suffer alone; that if the lower classes are involved in wretchedness and beggary, the more elevated shall not enjoy their prosperity unimpaired. That constitution of society is radically unsound, of which the inferior order is vicious and miserable: a wretched and degraded populace is a rent in the foundation; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, a taint of rottenness at the root of society, which will

infallibly wither and decay its remotest branches. Alarming as the present aspect of affairs unquestionably is, the most appalling feature of the times is the prevailing discontent of the lower orders; discontent, arising not so much from the infusion of speculative principles, as from the impression of actual distress. Alleviate their distress, convince them at least of your solicitude to do it, and you extirpate the seeds of disaffection far more effectually than by all the arts of intimidation. But if an insensibility to their sufferings in the higher ranks goads them to despair, nourishes an appetite for change, and prepares them to lend themselves to the sophistry of artful demagogues and unprincipled empirics, what will be the consequence, but a divided and distracted empire, where, instead of uniting to consolidate the resources of general prosperity, the necessity of employing one part of the nation in the coercion or punishment of the other, dissipates its efforts, and cripples its energy? We have the highest authority for asserting that a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;" and surely no schism in the body politic can be more fatal than that which alienates the hands from the head, the physical strength of society from its presiding intellect.

It may be objected to these observations, that, however just, they are irrelevant to the subject in hand, which relates not to a national, but to a provincial object. To which the reply is obvious, that every manufacturing county constitutes an

important part of the nation, and that there is no absurdity in supposing that the arrangement which is adapted to the situation of one, may be applied, with equal advantage, to another. Be this as it may, if the tranquillity of a central department of the empire can be maintained by a measure, which, while it rescues a numerous description of persons from the deepest misery, is beneficial to all, and burthensome to none, much is contributed to the fund of national prosperity, composed as it is, of separate portions of individual enjoyment and security.

Waiving, for the present, the consideration of the tendency of the measure in question to promote the welfare of the nation, the writer of these lines must be permitted to avow his attachment to his *natale solum*, to the soil that gave him birth, which recalls the image of his youth, with those affecting recollections which nature longest retains, and reluctantly quits. The philanthropy which affects to feel alike for every part of mankind, is false and spurious; that alone is genuine which glows with a warmth proportioned to the nearness of its objects. But who, that is not utterly devoid of such sentiments, can compare the present condition of this county with the past, without deep emotion? The writer well remembers it, when it was the abode of health and competence; a temperate and unstrained industry diffused plenty through its towns and villages; the harsh and dissonant sound of the loom was not unpleasant to

the ear, mingled with the evidence of the activity which it indicated, and the comfort it produced; the advance of summer invited the peasant to a grateful change of labour, while the village poured forth its cheerful population to assist in preparing the tedded grass, and reap the golden harvest; content resided in its valleys, joy echoed from its hills; the distresses of poverty were almost unknown, except by the idle and the profligate, its natural victims; and even the transition from peace was rather heard at a distance, than felt as a positive calamity. Some provinces, it is confessed, abounded with more splendid objects, with more curious specimens of art, and grander scenes of nature; but it was surpassed by none in the general diffusion of prosperity. But what a contrast is now presented, in the languid and emaciated forms, and dejected looks, of our industrious mechanics, who with difficulty drag their trembling limbs over scenes where their fathers gazed with rapture, "pleased with each rural sight, each rural sound!" A rapid depression of wages, like a gangrene, preys upon their vitals, and exhausts their strength. The crisis is arrived which is to decide the destiny of this part of the kingdom; its fate for the present generation, to say the least, depends, under Providence, entirely on the success of the measure now in agitation; and how, let me ask, can its hereditary nobility exert themselves more laudably, than by stretching forth the hand to save from ruin the county which gave them birth, and includes

the fund of their wealth, the scene of their magnificence, and the sepulchre of their fathers?

Though this appeal is, with the utmost propriety, made to them in the first instance, it is not confined to that elevated order; there is not a description of persons within the limits of the county who ought to contemplate the crisis with indifference; and so essential is the success of the present expedient to every hope of deliverance, that whatever be his station, he who withholds his quota from the general contribution, may justly consider himself as accessary to its ruin.

If there be any motive wanting, in addition to those which have been already urged, to excite us to exertion, it is found in the exemplary conduct of the principal sufferers. Never were privations so distressing endured with more manly fortitude; and, for my own part, I cannot look back on the patience and the constancy displayed through such a protracted scene of suffering, without ascribing it to a calm confidence in that Providence, which, sooner or later, never fails to interpose in behalf of such as trust in it, and which, at length, has inspired wisdom to discover, and resolution to apply, the only remedy. They have deplored their misery, they have exhibited their grievances, to the view of the public, in the language of nature and of truth, but rarely, if ever, have they forgotten their duties. Far from shrinking from the necessity of making the first sacrifice, they have cheerfully come forward to establish the present

fund, to which they have engaged to contribute sixpence a week out of their scanty earnings. We will not suppose for a moment a reluctance on the part of the public to assist and encourage a description of persons, whose welfare is inseparably combined with their own, and who, to the praise of patient endurance under the severest of trials, have added that of united and manly exertion to prevent their recurrence.

A REPLY

TO THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS ADVANCED BY

COBBETT AND OTHERS

AGAINST THE

FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FRIENDLY RELIEF SOCIETY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1821.]

A REPLY.

THE virulent opposition made to the *Frame-work Knitters' Friendly Relief Society*—a protective policy to secure themselves from the pressure of poverty and the pains of hunger,—may well excite the surprise of the reflecting and humane part of the public. This violence with which it is assailed forms, indeed, the most remarkable feature of the business, and is alone sufficient to awaken suspicion of a design not distinctly avowed. Its opponents are loud in proclaiming their conviction that it cannot possibly endure, that it must shortly come to an end. Why then not leave it to its fate? Why display this anxiety to accelerate its overthrow, these violent and persevering efforts to crush the feeble and precipitate the falling? If, as they contend, it contains within itself the seeds of speedy dissolution, no evil can result from abandoning it to the operation of its native tendencies, and suffering it to die a natural death. Is it not apparent that all this commotion and effort indicate a suspicion that it is not so fraught with the elements of self-destruction as they pretend, and that it *requires* to be powerfully assailed.

Its opponents confidently assert that it has no tendency to keep up the rate of wages—that these are regulated by causes over which it has no control—and that, in defiance of every possible arrangement, they will infallibly find their level. If such is really their conviction, their zeal is still more preposterous. For where is the policy or the prudence of exposing themselves to the suspicion of insensibility to the distresses of the working classes, by opposing a scheme which can have no effects, produce no consequences, while it continues, and the futility of which will be shortly apparent to all? The list of prices agreed upon between the employers and their men, they assert, is higher than the state of the trade will allow; and that, could it be maintained, it would be detrimental to the manufacturing interest, by preventing the sale of the article. Admitting this, it would afford a sufficient reason for opposing a measure which had a tendency to produce that effect, namely, the continuance of the Statement. But as it is loudly affirmed that the Frame-work Knitters' Union has no such tendency, but will leave the rate of wages just as it was, why this superfluity of zeal in opposing what can produce no mischief? If such is their real opinion, they are fighting with a shadow—combating a phantom. This, however, will hardly be supposed. Men are not accustomed to exert themselves with vehemence against an object of which they entertain no apprehension: they usually proportion their efforts to their alarms.

It is impossible not to discern, in the wanton and virulent attack of Cobbett, and others, on the *Frame-work Knitters' Society*, that more is meant than meets the ear—that a purpose is aimed which is not yet ripe for disclosure. Of this we may be assured, that there lurks at the bottom of this opposition a secret persuasion that the permanence of the Union will effect a permanent elevation of wages, above that extreme point of depression to which they had before subsided.

Here the first question which arises is, whether the recompense of labour, previous to the establishment of a fund, was such, on an average, as to enable a workman to procure for himself and his family the ordinary necessaries of life. For the answer to this we might refer the reader to our opponents, who, with some variation in their statements, unanimously acknowledge they were not sufficient for that purpose. The anonymous writer, who styles himself "An Observer," feebly attempts, it is true, to palliate the wretched condition of the workmen by referring us to the price of provisions, not in Leicestershire, be it remembered, but in Taunton,* and by informing us that a man working a frame of *thirty-two or finer gauge*, twelve hours a day, can earn eight shillings a week.† As in this very passage he is declaiming against "extreme statements as suspicious," who would suspect that the very passage which censures contains an example of it? But so it is; for the writer is

* Observer, p. 5. † Ibid. p. 6.

informed, by the most experienced manufacturers, that the kind of work adduced is of a superior order, on which very few, in comparison, are employed; and that the average earnings previous to the Union were from five shillings and sixpence to six shillings a week, not a moiety of the sum adequate to the decent support of an industrious family. The enormous pressure on the parishes which are the principal seats of manufacture, place the matter of fact for which we are contending beyond all controversy. But that the "labourer is worthy of his hire" is as much the dictate of reason as of scripture: and if there be any spectacle which shocks the natural feeling of justice, it is the sight of industry rewarded with famine—of a life devoted to severe and incessant toil, without the power of procuring the means of its own support. This is a state of things from which humanity recoils; but such was the condition of the greater part of the workmen previous to the *Union.*

The next question is, whether the sufferers have not a natural right to attempt the melioration of their condition, and by any means, consistent with the peace of society, and the inviolable security of property, to endeavour to rescue themselves from a state in which death is preferable to life. For what purpose, let me ask, is reason bestowed, if not to assist its possessor in contriving the means of alleviating his calamities and of improving his situation? The skill and labour of the poor man constitute his whole possession, and he has a right

to place it to the best advantage, for precisely the same reason that the rich capitalist is entitled to make the most advantageous disposal of his wealth. He has consequently, if he pleases, a right to set aside a portion of his earnings towards securing the means of a just and natural remuneration of his industry. I call that a just and natural remuneration which enables him to procure the necessaries of life for himself and his family. If, by the exercise of foresight and self-denial, he can evade the fatal necessity of lying entirely at the mercy of his master, where is the impropriety of his conduct, or of what have the public to complain? But such is precisely the principle of the *Frame-work Knitters' Union*. It is merely the policy of self-defence; an instrument invented by themselves, and supported principally from their own resources, for securing that recompense of labour which their employers with much unanimity affirmed to be reasonable, and which they voluntarily consented to give. It is not to be confounded for a moment with a combination to *raise* wages; it is merely a provision for securing the terms mutually stipulated between their employers and themselves. The necessity of some such measure was demonstrated by experience; a statement had been promised on a former occasion, but it was found that while there was a surplus of labour in the market, however inconsiderable, it was converted into a means of effecting a universal depression, far below the scale to which it would have naturally descended, in consequence

of the decreased demand. That wages should decline to a certain extent along with the demand, is the natural consequence of the vicissitudes of trade; still it is but equitable that they should bear some proportion to each other. We will suppose, out of ten thousand hands engaged in this manufacture, that one thousand are out of employ; here, supposing the remainder to labour with only their usual degree of assiduity, there are nine-tenths of the manufacture produced which was made when they were all at work. The probable demand has diminished one-tenth. But if the effect of this is to reduce the wages nearly one half, so as to place the necessaries of life out of the reach of the workmen, is not this a result to be deplored? and if any means, consistent with the peace of society, can be contrived to prevent it, ought they not to be adopted? In this case it is in vain to allege that the depression in question is rendered necessary in consequence of the decreased demand, because they bear no proportion one to the other. The demand is, by the supposition, diminished one-tenth—the wages are reduced nearly one-third. Such was the exact state of things at the late *turn-out* in Leicestershire. A proportion of about one in ten were unemployed, and this surplus of labour was converted, by a process not very creditable to the humanity of its authors, into an instrument of universal depression, to the extent already stated. The method by which it was accomplished is extremely simple. Those who were out of employ

were driven, by the distress of their situation, to offer their services on terms the most disadvantageous; the offer was accepted; and this afforded a pretext for gradually lowering the wages of the rest, who had no alternative but to submit to the abatement proposed, or quit their employ. Further reductions were imposed, which, for the same reason, were, for the most part, submitted to; till, through a few successive stages, the wages of all were brought to the same level. Thus the wretched workmen were reduced to the necessity of acquiescing, not in that abatement of wages which was proportioned to the diminished demand, but in the terms which a small minority were induced to accept; and the destitution and despair of a few became the gauge by which the miseries of all were measured out. If there is a man to be found who is perfectly reconciled to such a procedure, who sees nothing in it inconsistent with the dictates of the most refined and enlightened humanity, his mental structure is such as I shall never envy.

Since, in the case before us, it is the surplus of labour alone which affords the facility of affecting a depression so destructive, by obliging those who are unemployed to engage themselves at a price by which they could not live, the object of the *Union* is simply to take away that necessity, by withdrawing that portion of redundant labour which produced it; a mode of proceeding perfectly analogous to that which takes place in every branch of trade and manufacture. He who is

engaged in these, endeavours invariably to adjust the extent of the supply to the demand; if his capital enables him, he withholds his commodities from the market when it is glutted, and reproduces them when they are more eagerly called for. Is there any principle of political economy conceived to be violated by this discretionary power of the manufacturer to adjust his productions to his demand—to withdraw them from the market at his pleasure, when he foresees their sale will fetch no adequate returns? But this, *mutatis mutandis*, or with a slight change of names, is exactly the case under present discussion. The labour and skill of the mechanic or the artist constitute the article *he* has to dispose of; and the Frame-work Knitters Fund, against which such a clamour has been raised by interested and designing men, is nothing more or less than a provision for withholding such a portion of that article, as he perceives cannot be employed without ruinous consequences. If the principles of political economy are those of justice and common sense, they will authorize no more interference with the labouring mechanic, than with the tradesman or manufacturer: and if the manufacturer is not compelled to dispose of his productions on destructive terms, why should the mechanic be obliged thus to dispose of his labour? It will be acknowledged, it is more *difficult* for the mechanic to adjust his labour to the demand, than it is for the manufacturer to regulate his supply by the state of the market; but this is a distinct

consideration: the Frame-work Knitters' Fund is contrived with a view to obviate this difficulty, it has already done it to a great degree, and nothing but a more general cooperation of the workmen, and of parishes, is wanted to enable them to surmount it altogether.

The principles of political economy exclude the exercise of compulsion only, and, by consequence, all sort of legislative interference in commercial transactions: they were never understood by a single writer to control the exercise of free agency in any class of the community, and consequently not in the *Leicestershire Frame-work Knitters.* The science of political economy assumes for its basis, that every person best understands his own business; that the desire of improving his condition is inherent in man; and that when every one is left to pursue his individual interest in his own way, without injuring others, the combined successes arising from the unfettered endeavours of each to advance his particular interest, will produce a greater aggregate of wealth than it is possible to realize under a pervading system of legislative control. This is the master-principle of that science; and on this principle, the makers of stockings must be supposed to understand their own interest best; they have had a long and severe training in the school of adversity; and they are unanimously of opinion that the establishment of a fund out of their own earnings, in aid of such as are out of employ, is the most efficient

expedient for maintaining an adequate rate of wages. Having learned from experience that no agreement with their masters will stand, unless it is protected by such a provision, they have made it chiefly from their own resources, assisted by those parishes whose interest is deeply implicated in their support.

As far as the Fund is supported by the voluntary contributions of the men and of the parishes, both actuated solely by a view to their own interest, the whole proceeding is perfectly consonant to the principles of political economy, correctly interpreted; and for the voluntary contributions of the public, they are to be considered as entirely provisionary, to be continued no longer than is necessary to give stability to an infant institution; in which light they are abundantly justified by the principles of humanity, which are paramount to every other.

The total want of candour or of information in Mr. Cobbett is apparent in his neglecting to advert to the voluntary contributions of the Frame-work Knitters. The reader of his coarse invectives would be led to conclude, that the men contributed nothing, that it was merely a project of the public to aid the operative class in a particular manufacture; when in fact the whole affair originated with themselves, by whom it has all along been chiefly supported, and on whose exertions, aided by the parishes which are deeply interested in its preservation, its permanence entirely depends.

As our opponents, there is little doubt, "hissed for this fly," it is probable he was not put in possession of a circumstance which forms the nerves and sinews of the Union, but supplied with that information only which best suited their purpose. A serious alarm must have been felt to prompt them to have recourse to such an ally.

"Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

The omission of this fact enables him to invest the whole business with an air of ridicule, for which a just statement of the case would have furnished no pretence. An extensive combination of the public to assist the Frame-work Knitters, may, considered by itself, appear somewhat romantic; but when it is viewed in the light of a temporary support to an institution, which has to struggle with difficulties arising from the ignorance of some, and the self-interested perverseness and prejudice of others, it assumes a different character. The public have, in my humble opinion, displayed both humanity and wisdom in lending their aid to a plan which has already effected much good, and promises in its fuller developement to accomplish much more; but their assistance, however meritorious, must be considered as provisionary, while the permanence of the plan wholly depends on the exertions of the workmen, and the parishes. It is on the principle of an appropriation of a part of their earnings to their mutual assistance, and as a means of enabling parishes to alleviate a numerous

class at the least possible expense, that its merits must be tried, and its advantages estimated.

The "Observer" asserts that it has done little or nothing towards alleviating the general distress. The truth of this assertion, however, may be safely left to the discernment of the public. Let *them* say whether the situation of the workmen has not been materially improved during the two years that the *Union* has subsisted. When its effect has been to raise wages at least one-third, is it possible to doubt whether such an augmentation has been productive of a proportionable increase of comfort; or what but an experience of its advantages could have prompted men, not remarkably gifted with self-denying habits, to persist so long in making such a sacrifice?

Cobbett loudly and repeatedly asserts that the manufacturers *cannot afford* to give higher wages, referring to the conduct of those Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire houses which continue to stand out, as a decisive proof of his position. "If the price," he says, "can be afforded, why do not those hosiers in most extensive business give it? If they *aver* that they can afford it, why do they not give it? Mind, it is the hosiers in most extensive business that aver this, and yet they do not give the price."* It is a sufficient reply to these triumphant interrogations, that the most respectable hosiers *do* give it, and that they who do not, find by experience, that they can procure

* Cobbett, p. 70.

their work to be done on lower terms; the reason of which, is a surplus of labour in the market, whose operation in causing an universal depression has been already described.

It is the opinion of the most judicious manufacturers the writer has had the opportunity of consulting, that the demand for hosiery was little, if at all, diminished at the period immediately preceding the greatest depression of wages, nor was the number out of employ previously to its taking place more than ordinary. The system of depression in this county, it is a matter of public notoriety, did not originate in a decreased demand, nor did it proceed in any assignable proportion to that supposed diminution; it originated entirely in a vicious competition among a few individuals, for the monopoly of the London market. It was the eagerness of certain individuals to undersell each other in that market, which gave birth to the system, and to all the unspeakable calamities which have resulted from it. The process, by which it was effected, has been already explained so often that I am afraid to repeat it: it was brought about through the medium of such as were out of employ, who, by offering themselves on inferior terms, afforded an opportunity, eagerly embraced, of gradually reducing the rest to the same level. The hosiers must surely be allowed to be the best judges what wages they can afford, a great majority of whom have recorded their judgement on this subject, by a voluntary agree-

ment to give the *statement* price, signed and attested by their own hand. Ask any one of them who may have departed from it, why he did so? and if the reason he assigns is founded on a decreased demand, and the consequent necessity of depressing wages, I would almost consent to yield to our opponents the whole question at issue. No: this is not the answer, the writer of this can aver from his own knowledge it is not: it is always a reference to some other person, who is affirmed (whether truly or not signifies nothing) to get his work performed at a cheaper rate. In answer then to the question urged with so much exultation by Cobbett, "If the manufacturers can afford to give higher wages, why are they not given?" suffice it to say, that men are often little disposed to give what it is in their power to withhold; and that what is abated in wages is either added to profits, or goes to enable them to undersell their competitors, and by that means command a more extensive trade. Could it be proved that the *statement* had produced a glut in the market, by exceeding the demand, there would be some plausibility in Mr. Cobbett's representation; as it is, nothing can be more futile.

With a rudeness congenial with his habits, he grossly insults the anonymous writer who styles himself "Humanus," for asserting that men of little or no capital have compelled the superior manufacturers to depress the wages of their workmen, in order to prevent themselves from being

excluded from the market. This he represents as the greatest of all absurdities; telling him that he ought to have styled himself fool or hypocrite, for hazarding such a statement. If insolence were the proper corrective of folly, Mr. Cobbett would of all men be best qualified to administer the cure, though on that supposition his interference would be impertinent in the present instance. His confident assertion of the impossibility of a fact which is known to exist by all intelligent men in the county, is a specimen of his ignorance of the trade on which he so dogmatically decides. Men of little or no capital are incapable of bearing stock; they must dispose of their article at whatever price they can get, without waiting for a more favourable season. Hence they are the first to make sacrifices, to diminish the extent of which, and to enable them to sell immediately without absolute loss, they are under peculiar temptations to beat down the wages of their workmen, temptations from which the more opulent manufacturer is exempt; and when there is any considerable number out of employ, they easily find the means of effecting their object. A system, it is well known to all who reside in this county, is established, by which an extensive trade in hosiery is conducted by persons of little or no capital. Their bills, weekly drawn on London, are accepted, which is equivalent to a weekly supply of capital; and the inducement to afford this accommodation, is the extremely low price of the

goods which are manufactured *under the statement.* Is there a hosier in Leicestershire who will venture to deny the justice of this statement? In fact, this system has been carried to such an extent, that the most opulent hosiers have of late succeeded worst, old-established houses have quitted the business in disgust, and the trade has been gradually transferred to those who have profited by the gradual depression of wages.

If the 'Frame-work Knitters' Union is dissolved, it is universally allowed they will sink and lower, nor can any limits be assigned to which they may not descend. Before its formation, nearly half the subsistence of the workmen was drawn from the parishes, or in other words, from the public. But what can be conceived more monstrous than a manufacture carried on at the public expense, but not for the public benefit, where all the profits are appropriated to one description of persons, while the public are taxed to an enormous amount to enable a few individuals to secure to themselves those advantages? Is there an anomaly in the social system more prodigious than this, or more pregnant with the most alarming consequences? Is it a greater enormity, let me ask, to be compelled to support a numerous herd of sinecurists, pensioners, and "eaters of taxes," to use the elegant phraseology of Mr. Cobbett, than to pay half the wages of an extensive manufacture, without deriving from it one farthing of profit, while it swells out a putrid stream of pauperism which

overflows the land? Mr. Cobbett perhaps sees nothing in such a state repugnant to his feelings: in the despair of the poor, and the utter incapacity of the parishes to relieve their wants, he seems to exult, as the infallible prognostic of some great convulsion; but there are those, and I hope not a few, who will contemplate such a prospect with horror.

He is anxious to impress the belief that the distress of the frame-work knitters is to be ascribed to the accumulation of taxes, and to no other cause. This, from beginning to end, is his darling theme. It is far from my intention to deny that the general decay of trade and commerce is intimately connected with the enormous weight of taxation: or that it is in vain to expect a return to national prosperity, unless some efficient means are devised to lighten their pressure. It is equally certain, however, though the exhausting effect of excessive taxation may have prepared a way for the evils we deplore, that a system has been adopted in the hosiery trade which has aggravated the calamity of the working class, far beyond the necessary operation of that general cause. The taxes are the same in the west of England as in the midland counties; but the wages in the clothing districts have not been reduced: the manufacture of cloth has been all along adjusted to the demand. The weight of taxes is as heavy in the Staffordshire potteries as here; but the remuneration of labour has remained steady and

uniform. Less work is given out in proportion as the demand slackens; and I have it from the best authority, that the earnings of the workmen are, at this moment, abundantly adequate to their means of subsistence. They are three times as high as those of the stocking-makers were before the formation of the *Union.* By the system pursued in these branches, the evils resulting from a decreased demand are kept within their natural limits; no adventitious ingredient is infused into the cup, no artificial aggravation added to their sufferings. But in the hosiery manufacture it is just the reverse: the calamity indirectly inflicted on the industrious poor by means of such as are out of employ, is incalculably greater than that which results from the failure of employment; and the destitution of a part becomes, in skilful hands, a mighty engine for the destruction of the whole.

What is the remedy proposed by our opponents? "The only effectual relief," Humanus says, "for the distresses of the frame-work knitters, is for a great part of the present hands to leave the trade, and that not for a season, but entirely and for ever." We needed not the information of this sagacious adviser, that the root of the mischief lies in a redundancy of hands, that it is devoutly to be wished that parents would cease as much as possible to train up their children to this calling, that masters would take fewer apprentices, and some method could be discovered to lessen the number engaged in this branch of manufacture.

This is all very desirable. But what is to become of the existing generation? To what employ can they turn with advantage who have acquired no other craft, and whose habits totally disqualify them for agricultural labour, were it to be procured? Under these circumstances, to advise them to "retire entirely and for ever," is to recommend suicide and death. Is not the *general* decay of trade and manufacture the topic of universal complaint, and must not the greatest difficulty be encountered, where all the ranks of employment are dense with population, and crowded to excess, in attempting to open a fresh career for their industry? Unless something more practicable and definite is suggested, to bid them retire because they are not wanted, is not to advise, but to mock them.

The formation of a fund towards the support of such as are incapable of procuring work, but upon such terms as are ruinous to every description of their brethren, presents a specific remedy for the existing disorder, and the only one which is equivalent to a cruel mockery of their woes.

The principal sophism which pervades the strictures of Mr. Cobbett, and others, on this subject, is a vicious generalization, in consequence of which he imagines he has sufficiently accounted for the wretched state of the workmen in a particular manufacture, by referring it to the cause which has produced a declension in the state of trade and manufacture in general; whence he infers that he is entitled to pour ridicule and contempt upon

every expedient which is distinct from the removal of that cause. But along with the general source of a decline in commerce, there are a number of *particular circumstances* which must be noticed, in order to account for that state of depression in which some branches are found, in comparison with others. As far as our political embarrassments alone are concerned, their operation must be *equally* disadvantageous to every species of productive labour, to every kind of trade and manufacture whatever. But these are not all equally depressed, which they must have been if the political state of the nation were alone sufficient to account for all the phenomena. The fact is, that while every department of manufacture is probably injured by our pecuniary embarrassments, the working classes, in some, are found to be in a much more favourable situation than in others. The remuneration of labour, for example, in the western clothing districts, in the Staffordshire potteries, I might add in no part of the kingdom, has been depressed as it has been here. The reason of this has been again and again explained; it has arisen from the illiberal advantage which has been taken of a surplus of labour; while, in the districts just referred to, that practice has not been adopted, less work is given out when less is demanded, and the earnings are sufficient to procure all the necessaries, and some of the comforts of life. As the distemper is local and specific, the remedy must be of the same description.

The list of prices agreed upon is considerably less than is sufficient to maintain the condition which honest industry ought ever to occupy, decidedly less than might be afforded in a more prosperous state of the country. It is such, however, as the great body of the masters have declared themselves able to give, while they affirm they can do no more. Since their conviction of their ability to do this is a deliberate recorded opinion, let the reader judge of the audacity of Mr. Cobbett in the following assertion: "He, Humanus," says Mr. Cobbett, "affirms that the hosiers in the most extensive business aver they can afford the statement prices. We might treat this as nothing, we might call it a falsehood, because it is against reason, and because the averment is not produced and attested; we have the bare word of an anonymous writer for it; that is all, and that is nothing." "We might call it a falsehood;" certainly Mr. Cobbett might, who displays throughout such an intimate familiarity with the "father of lies;" but let us hope no other man could be found who would stigmatize as a falsehood, the assertion that such is the averment of the manufacturers, after they had signed and attested it with their own hand. This recorded opinion is an unanswerable confutation of the assertion, so often repeated by our opponents, that the hosiers cannot afford the *statement* price; for surely they will not be so absurd as to impute to them a formal resolution of giving wages, which

they were conscious at the time they could not well afford. It may, therefore, be assumed as a fact, placed beyond all dispute, that the *statement* proposed is such as will leave a reasonable rate of profits to the hosiers, from whence we adduce two conclusions; first, that the assertion of those who maintain that the *statement*, were it adhered to, would be ruinous to the trade, is a falsehood, because it is formally contradicted by the persons who must be allowed, in what immediately concerns their own interest, to be the best judges: secondly, that besides the operation of taxes in deteriorating wages, other causes, of a more specific nature, have contributed to produce that effect, and that, consequently, the whole argumentation of Mr. Cobbett, which proceeds upon the denial of this, falls to the ground.

It is repeatedly objected by the "Observer," that the proposed *statement* can never become permanent, because it is impossible to induce the masters to adhere unanimously to their agreement. To this I answer, that such unanimity is not contemplated, nor is it necessary. The principal, perhaps the only benefit of the agreement is, that it stamps a legal character on the proceedings of the men, which might otherwise expose them to the penalties of combination. If they become sufficiently enlightened to their own interests, to afford an adequate support to the fund, the surplus labour will be disposed of, and it will no longer be in the power of those who may be disposed

to convert it into an instrument of universal depression. The list of prices agreed upon at Nottingham, in the year 1819, to which the "Observer" refers, produced no permanent effect in Nottinghamshire, nor in Derbyshire, because no fund was established in those counties to support it; in Leicestershire the same agreement was followed by the most efficient consequences, because it received that support. And this is the reason, and the only reason, that every thing reverted so soon to its former state; not, as this writer affirms, in consequence of a diminution of demand produced by the *statement;* for, had this been the cause, the effect would have been felt in Leicestershire equally, but it was not, solely because the surplus of labour was removed by the provisions of the fund.

The "Observer" further remarks, that "it borders on the ludicrous to talk of men *plunged in the very depths of despair,* from their scanty earnings raising a fund for their unemployed associates; and, unless they can do this, their project must fail." This writer forgets that he had before represented these very men in a tolerably comfortable state, referring us for proof to the price of provisions in the Taunton market. It suited the scope of his argument then to elevate their condition, whom he now, for a similar purpose, "*plunges into the very depths of despair.*" The reader will, in a moment, perceive what credit is due to a writer who is entangled in such contra-

dictions, who attributes to the same persons comfort and despair, just as it suits his convenience. But, passing these inconsistencies, the reply is obvious, that, if the manufacturers in the neighbouring counties imitate the example of this, their men, no longer plunged into the very depths of despair, will be incomparably more able to subscribe sixpence a week to the fund, than to procure subsistence in their present circumstances. The "Observer" must be aware that their competence to contribute their quota is assumed only on the supposition of the *statement* being given; and he must not be permitted to change suppositions backwards and forwards, with the same dexterity that he converts comfort into despair. Since it is allowed by our opponents, that, where no fund exists, the workmen are "in the depths of despair," the only question is, what must be done? How is the intolerable load under which they are groaning to be alleviated or removed? Mr. Cobbett's grand panacea is, recourse to the parishes; not that he is so ignorant as to suppose it possible they should afford effectual relief, but that he foresees other effects resulting from it, which he is evidently much more anxious to realise. "But," says he, "are you to have no redress? Are you to starve, in short? No: no man, woman, or child, is to starve; the law says so, and rely upon the law. A man works constantly; he is sober, he wastes nothing. His master can or will give him no more; and with

what he gets he is starving, with his family. Now what says the law? Why, that he shall be relieved, that he shall share out of the common stock, out of that which was originally one man's as well as another's; out of that which God gave for all—out of the *land.*"* But is he not aware that the pressure of parish rates is already almost intolerable; that they are levied on thousands who are themselves on the brink of pauperism; and that, in many parts of the country, they have reduced the value of land to such a state, that even were it occupied free of rent, the farmer could hardly subsist by the produce? It is true they may not have reached the point which Mr. Cobbett triumphantly contemplates, the utter ruin and extinction of landed proprietors; but they have already attained a portentous magnitude, which no lover of his country can contemplate without dismay.

This seems to be the proper place for noticing a monstrous position advanced by this writer, with a confidence which can only be surpassed by its falsehood. "Viewing the thing in its true light," he says, "what is the nation, and particularly *the landed proprietor,* to gain by an additional sum being given to you in wages? What is he to gain by a million of money paid to stocking weavers *more* than is now paid to them? Is there not a million *less* to be laid out by somebody else? If the labourer pays a crown a year more for stockings,

* Cobbett, p. 97.

has he not a crown less to lay out in bread and beer? If, indeed, the additional million were paid to you, were to be expended by you, or flung into the sea; or if the additional million were to drop down into your hands from the clouds, in either of these cases there might be some sense in Humanus's argument: as the thing is, it is nonsense."* This is the reasoning, be it remembered, of the man who in the same pamphlet ascribes all our calamities "to so large a portion being taken from those who labour, to be given to those who do not labour."† If the above reasoning is correct, it will follow that the value of land would not be diminished, though the stocking weavers earned nothing at all, but were entirely supported by the parish. On this supposition, it is true they would have no wages, but some other persons would possess them, or, which is the same thing, their amount, which, if they had *not*, they would be less able to purchase the produce of the soil, in exact proportion to that amount. More error and absurdity, I will venture to assert, were never penned within the same compass than are contained in the paragraph just quoted. It proceeds on the following extraordinary assumptions; First, That all the purchasers of hosiery are also purchasers of the other parts of the produce of the British soil, and that in the same proportion. For if this is not the case; if they either do not purchase the other parts of our produce at all, or not in the same

* Cobbett, p. 91. † Ibid. p. 117.

proportion, how will it follow that they must necessarily buy just so much *less* of our corn, and of every other article which the land produces, because they buy *more* of our hosiery? Look at foreign nations: our stockings make their way into a large proportion of the habitable world; but are all the inhabitants of the regions into which they penetrate accustomed to purchase equal proportions of the other branches of our rude produce? The far greater part, it is well known, purchase none of these, and few, if any, in the same proportion.

Secondly, It assumes for granted, that all who purchase hosiery expend to the *utmost extent of their income*, so that, if they give five shillings a year *more* for hosiery, they must necessarily lay out five shillings *less* in other articles of consumption. "They have, it seems, just *so much* that they can lay out upon stockings."* It must be evident to the intelligent reader that this mode of reasoning presupposes an exact equality of expenditure and of income, and that, consequently, it is applicable only to such whose circumstances oblige them to practise in every instance the strictest and most rigid economy. But the chief purchases of manufacture are made by consumers of a very different description; by persons whose situation enables them to sustain a much greater advance of price than is here mentioned, without the necessity of abridging themselves in other modes of

* Cobbett, p. 90.

indulgence. If Mr. Cobbett's reasoning were just, the demand for every article, at distinct periods, would be exactly proportioned to its price; but experience shews the contrary, that the demand is not regulated solely by the price, but by many other concurrent causes, which it is needless at present to specify. He forgets the "eaters of taxes," the nobility, the gentry, the landed proprietors, the opulent merchants, the thriving tradesmen, together with the myriads of others, who are in easy circumstances and live within their income, all of whom wear stockings, and can well afford an advance of a few shillings on that head, without a proportional diminution in every other branch of expenditure. Though this class of the community may not be the most numerous, it cannot be doubted that they are the chief purchasers of manufacture.

Thirdly, His argument goes upon the supposition, that it is of no consequence to the public *where* wealth is deposited, provided it is not "thrown into the sea." Admitting the truth of this, how can the taxes be the cause of our calamities, as he asserts, "by taking from those who labour, and giving to those who do not labour?"* and how unreasonable and absurd his violent outcry against the landholders, pensioners, and sinecurists! To the accumulation of wealth in *their* hands he attributes all our distresses, who yet are

* Cobbett, p. 92.

as little disposed, we presume, as any men, "to throw it into the sea."

May they not retort upon him, and say, "You ascribe the ruin of the nation to the transfer of its wealth into the hands of those who do not labour from those who do. But our money is employed either in loans or in consumption. The capital we lend is employed by merchants and manufacturers, in maintaining productive labour, while the money we consume tends, immediately, by taking off the produce, to keep up the value of land; and it is certain, considered under either mode of operation, that, were it transferred to others, we, its present possessors, should have so much *less* to employ or to spend?" I am far from supposing this reasoning would be correct; but I have no hesitation in affirming it is the legitimate consequence of his principle, which is, that the landed proprietor would not be benefited by the improved condition of the working classes, nor injured even by the extinction of wages, unless "they were thrown into the sea." The operative part of the people, those, we mean, who are immediately employed in productive labour, probably compose much less than a moiety of the whole nation: the remaining part of the population must, as far as the present argument is concerned, be classed with those who *do not labour.* Suppose the wages of the stocking weavers were universally depressed, so as to be totally inadequate to their support, which was actually the case before the late regulations; in consequence of the

competition among the manufacturers, a correspondent abatement in the price of the article would be the necessary consequence; hosiery would be just so much the cheaper, and the deduction from the wages, being subtracted from the price, would be in fact given to the purchasers. A very large proportion of these, however, consist of such as *do not labour*. Here then we have an example of the transfer of property from "those who do, to those who do not labour," which Mr. Cobbett represents as the root and origin of all our evils; yet strange to tell, this same writer affirms that the process by which this is effected is productive of no injury to the public. A portion of the wages withheld would, in consequence of the abatement of price, pass into the hands even of the placemen, pensioners, and sinecurists themselves. Let me ask whether this would not, on his own principles, be a direct transfer of so much money from those "who labour to those who do not?" yet is he guilty of the absurdity of saying, that an arrangement which he asserts to be so destructive to the whole nation in every other instance, would in this produce no inconvenience whatever, either to the public, or to the landed proprietor.

The reader is probably by this time weary of attending to the palpable contradictions of this arrogant and superficial declaimer: suffice it to remark that it requires little or no penetration to perceive that the extinction of wages, and the consequent absolute pauperism of the working classes,

would effect the deepest depression of the value of land in every manufacturing district; and that no remedy would be found in the decreased price of the article, since the saving arising from it would be reaped, not by the landholder, but by the public, in minute and almost invisible portions, through all its diversity of ranks, and by foreign nations.

Mr. Cobbett, with much confidence and equal exultation, predicts the destruction of the landed interest as the certain, the inevitable consequence of the present crisis. Whatever probability may attach to these dismal forebodings, arises chiefly, if not wholly, from the alarming increase of poor rates, and this latter from the inadequate remuneration of labour. For what is it else, except in time of sickness, which drives a poor man to have recourse to parish relief? Were the rate of wages sufficient to procure, with facility, the means of human subsistence, is it possible to doubt that the parochial burdens would be most essentially alleviated, that the farmer and householder would find it much easier to pay the ordinary rent? The ingenuity of Mr. Cobbett, however, has enabled him to discover that, were a million a year added to the wages of labour, the landed proprietor would not derive the advantage of a farthing.

These, and such like extravagancies, will be quite sufficient to satisfy the reader, that he is a popular declaimer, not a philosopher; a firebrand, not a luminary. He emits fire and smoke in

abundance, like a volcano, but the whole effect is to desolate, not to enlighten. His principal artifice consists in the exhibition of a few specious and bold generalities, which he illustrates and confirms by a few prominent facts, culled for his purpose, without the slightest attempt at that patient induction and inquiry, which alone lead to solid and useful results. Shrewd, intemperate, presumptuous, careless of the truth of his representations, and indifferent to their consequences, provided they make an impression, he is well qualified, it must be confessed, by his faults no less than his talents, by his inflammatory style and incendiary spirit, for the office he assumes, to scatter delusion, to excite insurrection, the Polyphemus of the Mob, "the one-eyed monarch of the blind." His strictures, however, on the topic under consideration are pregnant with instruction it was not his design to communicate. Whatever the inhabitants of this county may think of the Frame-work Knitters' Union, *he* plainly foresees in the consequences of its failure, the materials of ferocious delight; he sees, without the aid of inspiration, an inundation of miseries to follow, paupers crowding by thousands to the doors of overseers, parishes dismayed and perplexed, the poor clamouring for bread which cannot be given them, and rushing upon the point of the bayonet to avoid a more cruel and lingering death; the commencement of that tempest, in a word, which he boasts having crossed the Atlantic

to witness, which is to shake all that is stable, to prostrate all that is great, and to accumulate a pile for the elevation of future demagogues.

Rome trembled when Cataline rejoiced. Let the friends of peace and order then, let the landed proprietor especially, take warning; they stand upon the brink of a precipice, from which, if they suffer themselves to be precipitated, it will be no small aggravation of their calamity to perceive the ease with which it might have been prevented; together with the contemptible agency, and the flimsy sophistry, which accelerated their overthrow. If it is some consolation to the fallen to have perished by a noble hand, the indignity of being baffled and deluded by the author of the Political Register, must be more humiliating than words can express.

Having extended these strictures beyond my original design, and exhausted, it is to be feared, the patience of my readers, it is my intention to detain them no longer than while I notice an objection to the *Union*, more plausible than any of the preceding, though for the reasons which follow, entirely destitute of solidity.

It is alleged by its opponents, that the provision of a Fund for the support of such as are out of employ, affords a direct encouragement to idleness, the most baleful habit a poor man can contract. This objection, could it be sustained, would undoubtedly be weighty; whether it can or not, must depend upon the previous question, Will

the number out of employ be *permanently* greater if the *statement* continues, than on the contrary supposition? That it may have that effect for a short time, we are not disposed to deny: the manufacturers having suspended their operations to a considerable degree, some hoping for the dissolution of the Society, others from an apprehension of that event, it is probable the moment it were announced, all hands would be set to work. A spirit of vigour and activity would seem for a moment to pervade the trade. But look a step or two further. The number employed in manufacturing, the strained exertions they would be necessitated to make to compensate for the lowness of their wages, and the deteriorated state of the article, would combine to produce a glut, which re-acting both in the wages and the price, would eventually, and at no great distance neither, produce a greater surplus of labour than exists at present. As my opinion on such a subject may be deemed of little value, I must be allowed to add, that it perfectly coincides with that of the most intelligent men in the trade, and is strongly corroborated by the fact, that there were as many out of work at the time when wages were the most depressed, as at other seasons. Many of them wrought sixteen instead of twelve hours a day; the fabric produced was also of a deteriorated quality, incapable of being vended in foreign markets, insomuch that, I am credibly informed that, in different parts of Europe, in Germany

particularly, its being known to be *British* is a sufficient reason for refusing it. The demand for labour then, there is every reason to believe, would not be permanently augmented by returning to the former system, and consequently the number out of employ not diminished. For reasons already specified, it is almost certain the reverse would be the case, and the surplus labour keep pace with the redundant superfluity of manufacture.

The project of raising it by lowering wages has been tried, and found unavailing; and whatever attempts are made to renew it, will resemble the labour of Sisyphus; it will be rolling a stone which will for ever fall back.

The sum proposed to be paid from the Fund to such as are out of work, is, at the most, six shillings and sixpence a week, sufficient indeed to preserve them from lying utterly at the mercy of their masters, but certainly not such as to render their situation attractive, nor greater than the parishes would be under the necessity of paying shortly to a much greater number, were the Society abolished. While it provides a remedy for the existing evils, it leaves sufficient inducement to seek out other channels for their industry, whenever the state of society shall afford them.

We are far from contending that the system which it is our object to recommend is one of unmingled perfection, productive of good only, without the least alloy; for such is not the con-

dition of human institutions, or of human affairs. The possibility of perversion and abuse inseparably adheres to every conceivable plan for ameliorating the condition of mankind; and he who refuses his approbation to every thing short of perfection, must stand still in hopeless inactivity and despair. If it has been shown that the plan adopted in Leicestershire provides the only remedy for an evil which is progressive and intolerable, that the inconveniences attending it bear no proportion to its advantages, and, above all, that the principal objections urged by its opponents will apply with equal force to every other mode of proceeding, and most of all to that which *they* recommend, every reasonable demand is satisfied. Whether this has been accomplished or not, must be left to the decision of an enlightened public; nor let it be deemed presumptuous to say, that if such had not been the firm persuasion of the author, these pages had not appeared.

If he should be thought to have treated Mr. Cobbett with too much severity, he wishes it to be clearly understood that his censure is in no degree founded on the professed attachment of that writer to the cause of reform. Educated in the principles of Mr. Fox, and in those of the earliest and best days of Mr. Pitt, to which advancing years and experience have increased his attachment, it is impossible he should entertain a doubt that an important reform in our representation is essentially connected with the freedom,

the glory, and the happiness of the British empire. But he sees in Mr. Cobbett, what the intelligent part of the public will at once discern, a design to push the industrious classes of the community to despair, and to aggravate their distresses, in order to accelerate the catastrophe he contemplates; whether it involves the preservation of the constitution, or a total subversion of the existing order of things, must be left to the judgement of the reader. On the most favourable supposition, "to do evil that good may come," to wish to see the industrious part of the population couched under a supernumerary weight, that they may become instrumental in effecting some great and undefined revolution in public affairs, is a policy which he shall ever detest; nor can he sufficiently deprecate the infusion of political venom into the discussions which the present *Union* has produced.

Let those who, from interested motives, or from motives of a still worse description, concur with Mr. Cobbett in vilifying and exploding the present plan, propose something better, unless they are determined to exemplify that malignant potency of evil by which "one sinner destroys much good." It is surely not too much to demand, before they proceed to dilapidate the only asylum offered to the industrious mechanic, that, instead of exposing him houseless and shivering to the inclement blast, they should provide some better accommodation in its room. Other expedients have been devised; a large subscription was raised, and many thousands

advanced in Nottinghamshire, with a view to employ the indigent frame-work knitters, in public works. But the scheme, as might have been foreseen, proved abortive. The exertion could not be continued, a succession of public works is not easily found; and after alleviating the distress of a single winter, every thing returned back to its former channel. A similar plan, the writer is informed, is in contemplation for this county, and, as far as it is adopted to relieve the pressure of the Fund, we shall rejoice in its success; but, if it is intended to supersede it, or to withdraw that support which the difficulties attending an infant institution may demand, it will, in my humble opinion, be unspeakably injurious. That it will produce no permanent relief to the existing distress, is evident from the example of Nottingham; and, however praiseworthy the motives of its projectors, it is but the part of candour to warn the workmen and the parishes, that if their dependence upon it tempts them to relax their present exertions, they will discover, when it is too late, that they have lost the substance by grasping at a shadow. The evil required to be remedied originates in permanent causes, such as will mock the operation of all temporary expedients.

With respect to the apprehension which some have professed to entertain, of the removal of the manufacture to the neighbouring counties, or to some distant part of the kingdom, little requires to be said. Man is the same in every county,

and the energy which has been displayed by the Leicestershire weavers will, there is no doubt, be successfully imitated elsewhere, and produce the same results. In Nottinghamshire we are happy to find, from the latest intelligence, that the most numerous and respectable part of the hosiers have already acceded to the *statement*, and little doubt is entertained of the speedy concurrence of the rest. This apprehension, therefore, if there ever was any ground for it, the event has dispelled. Had it been otherwise, are the operative classes in this department to starve, or reduce to ruin every other description, by ineffectual efforts to support them, in the contemplation of a remote contingency, and for the sake of securing a manufacture, which, upon such terms, can only be considered as an epidemic disease, an imposthume, a source of misery to all who are employed in it, and of embarrassment and distress to the whole community? The competition for such a manufacture is a competition for ruin.

Before I conclude, let me be permitted to remind the reader that there is such a sin as oppression; that it consists not in that gross violation of justice which is cognizable by law, and against which the wisdom of all civilized nations has provided; but in taking such an advantage of the weakness and necessity of the poor as converts them into mere instruments of a superior power, the victims of selfish emolument, with no other consideration than how far their physical exertions

may be rendered subservient to the gratification of an unfeeling rapacity. He is the oppressor who is not restrained by the dictates of humanity from pushing, to its utmost extent, the natural superiority which riches every where possess over poverty; and the stratagems by which this may be effected are too numerous and too subtle to fall within the cognizance of any earthly tribunal. When the Scripture denounces, with such awful severity, the doom of such as "withhold their hire from those who reaped the field,"* we must not suppose it refers so much to a violation of compact, an offence which the laws of no civilized country would permit, as to the *inadequacy* of the recompense itself. In the eye of heaven, wages may justly be said to be *withheld* from the labourer, when they are totally inadequate to his subsistence, and such as nothing but helpless indigence could induce him to accept. Instead of inquiring how much of this species of guilt may be justly chargeable on a certain class of manufacturers in this town and county, which would only suggest matter for irritating reflection and fruitless recriminations, let us rather rejoice that a new scene has opened, and a plan been adopted, which, we trust, will cut off the opportunity from the bad, and the temptation from the good, of renewing a system which should be consigned to eternal oblivion.† In this

* James v. 4.

† See "Letters to Buxton," published by Longman and Co. which breathe throughout the eloquence of the heart, and in

view, we have no hesitation in asserting that the perpetuity of the Friendly Society is intimately connected with the interest of both worlds, since it is no less the dictate of humanity and of justice, than of sound policy.

which the cause of humanity is pleaded, and the sufferings of the industrious classes painted with a pathos it is impossible to resist.

AN ADDRESS

ON

THE STATE OF SLAVERY

IN THE

WEST INDIA ISLANDS,

FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1824.]

PROCEEDINGS.

At a Meeting of persons, inhabitants of the Town of Leicester and its Vicinity, held the 17th of December, 1823,

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq. in the Chair;

Resolved,

1. That the individuals composing the present Meeting are deeply impressed with the conviction that the state of Slavery is repugnant to justice, humanity, and sound policy, to the principles of the British constitution, and to the spirit of the Christian religion; and that they cannot consider the legal perpetuation of Slavery, in principle, more defensive than the Slave Trade itself.

2. That they call to mind, with sorrow and shame, that there are eight hundred thousand persons in a state of personal Slavery in the Colonies of Great Britain, deprived of those civil privileges and religious advantages to which, as our fellow-subjects, they are entitled.

3. That, although a hope was long indulged, that the Abolition of the Slave Trade would have produced most beneficial consequences to the Slave population in the Colonies, no effectual steps have been taken, during the sixteen years which have

elapsed since that event, for mitigating in any material degree the evils of Negro bondage, or for putting an end to a system which outrages every feeling of humanity.

4. That the House of Commons having, during the last Session of Parliament, unanimously passed the following resolutions, viz.

> "1. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the Slave population in his Majesty's Colonies;
>
> "2. That, through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave population; such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects;
>
> "3. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well-being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the state of property therein;"

the individuals present feel themselves called upon to promote these objects to the utmost of their power, by all prudent and lawful means.

5. That for this purpose, a Society be now formed in Leicester and its vicinity, as an Auxiliary to the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions.

6. That subscriptions be received by the Treasurer, at the Bank of Messrs. Mansfield and Co. and by the Secretary; and

that all persons subscribing annually to the Society be Members of it, and be entitled to attend and vote at all General Meetings.

7. That all persons subscribing ten shillings or upwards yearly, or five pounds at one time, be Governors of the Society.

8. That the business of the Society be conducted by a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Committee, consisting of not less than fifteen Governors, and that five constitute a quorum; and that the President, Treasurer, and Secretary be, ex officio, members of the Committee.

9. That the Committee meet once every two months, and at such other times as they may fix, and call General Meetings of the Subscribers when they shall judge it requisite; and that any five members of it be authorized to direct the Secretary to summon a Special Meeting of the Committee, giving three days' notice thereof.

OFFICERS

OF THE

LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

President.

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq.

Treasurer.

MATTHEW BABINGTON, Esq.

Secretary.

Mr. THOMAS BURGESS.

Committee.

Hon. and Rev. H. D. Erskine.
Rev. G. B. Mitchell.
Rev. T. B. Paget.
Rev. E. H. Hoare.
Rev. Robert Hall.
Rev. Charles Berry.
Rev. John Babington.
William Heyrick, Esq.
Dr. Hill.
John Coltman, Esq.
J. S. Cardale, Esq.
Mr. Priestman.
Mr. John Ellis.
Mr. Joseph Nunneley.
Mr. Frederic Bankart.
Mr. George Lockwood.
Mr. James Cort.
Mr. John Yates.

ADDRESS.

THAT slavery is the most deplorable condition to which human nature can be reduced, is too evident to require the labour of proof. By subjecting one human creature to the absolute control of another, it annihilates the most essential prerogative of a reasonable being, which consists in the power of determining his own actions in every instance in which they are not injurious to others. The right improvement of this prerogative is the source of all the virtue and happiness of which the human race is susceptible. Slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons to that of things; and by merging the interests of the slave in those of the master, he becomes a mere appendage to the existence of another, instead of preserving the dignity which belongs to a reasonable and accountable nature. Knowledge and virtue are foreign to his state; ignorance the most gross, and dispositions the most depraved, are requisite to reduce him to a level with his condition.

But degrading as slavery is, in its mildest form, that species of it which prevails in our West India colonies* is of the very worst description, far less

* The following authorized summary of the number of slaves in the British Colonies, in June 1830, may be interesting to some readers.

tolerable than that which subsisted in Greece and Rome during the reign of paganism. It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil for the benefit of those from whom they receive no recompense whatever: they are indebted for their principal subsistence to the cultivation of small portions of land allotted them under the name of provision grounds: and the only time ordinarily allowed for that purpose is the day which the laws of all christian states have devoted to rest. On that day, instead of being assembled to listen to the oracles of God, and to imbibe the consolations of piety, they are necessitated to work for their living, and to dispose of the produce of their labour

Antigua, 29,839. Bahama Isles, 10,841. Barbadoes, 81,902. Berbice, 21,319. Bermuda, 4,608. Cape of Good Hope, 35,509. Demerara and Essequibo, 69,467. Dominica, 15,392. Grenada, 24,342. Jamaica, 331,119. Mauritius, 76,774. Montserrat, 6,262. Nevis, 9,259. St. Christopher's, 19,310. St. Lucia, 13,661. St. Vincent, 23,589. Tobago, 12,723. Trinidad, 24,452. Virgin Islands, 5,436.

Total number of Slaves in the British Colonies, 815,804.

Free Blacks in the British Colonies, about 51,000.

The Slave population of the United States in America, in 1830, amounted to 2,010,436; being increased threefold since the year 1790! This is an anomalous result, with which those in Great Britain who admire America, her free institutions, and her missionary spirit, are exceedingly perplexed. Ed.

at the public market; the natural consequence is, that the far greater part of them are as ignorant of the first principles of christianity as though they had remained in the land of their forefathers.*

* Since the first edition of this volume was published, a very important *official* document has been promulgated in reference to the duty and the consequences of instructing our West India slaves in the principles of the christian religion.

A most extensive and alarming insurrection among the slave population in Jamaica, having occurred at the very beginning of the present year, 1832, an insurrection which many influential men, and some public functionaries in that island, imputed (very erroneously, as has since been legally proved) to the instructions of christian missionaries of different persuasions; the present enlightened government of this country,—whose views in these respects are more correct, so far as public documents make them known, than those of any of their predecessors, at least during the current century,—authorized, under the direction of the King in Council, a "Despatch from Viscount Goderich to the Earl of Belmore," governor of Jamaica, dated March 1. As some of the principles developed in that paper are too valuable to be permitted to slide from the columns of a newspaper into oblivion, I shall transfer a few passages into this note.

"The documents which your lordship has transmitted ascribe the recent commotions, not merely to the erroneous belief amongst the slaves that some law had set them free, but to the influence of religious instruction, communicated by ignorant teachers, received by a population unprepared by any previous education to apprehend the real spirit of christianity."

"Amongst those who acknowledge the divine authority of our national faith, there is no room for controversy respecting the duty of imparting the knowledge of christianity to all mankind, and especially to our more immediate dependents. However the modes or seasons of instruction may be regulated according to the various circumstances of different classes of society, nothing can justify the systematically withholding from any man, or class of men, a revelation given for the common benefit of all. I could not therefore acknowledge that the slaves in Jamaica could be permitted to

They are driven to the field by the cart whip. They are followed by a driver, with this dreadful

live and die amidst the darkness of heathen idolatry, whatever effect the advancing light of christianity might ultimately have upon the relation of master and slave; nor am I anxious to conceal my opinion, that a change in this relation is the natural tendency, and must be the ultimate result, of the diffusion of religious knowledge amongst them. For although the great moral virtues of contentment and universal benevolence may be expected to appear amongst a christian slave population, as the legitimate fruit of christian principles, yet all probability justifies the belief, and all experience attests the fact, that the increased range of thought, the new habits of reflection, and the more lively perception of the duties owing by their fellow-christians to themselves, to which the converted slaves will attain, will gradually produce in their minds new feelings respecting their servile condition. It is also worth while to reflect on the inevitable tendencies of the laws for the abolition of the slave trade. So long as the islands were peopled by the importation of native Africans, who lived and died in heathenism, the relation of master and slave might be expected to be permanent; but now that an indigenous race of men has grown up, speaking our own language, and instructed in our religion, all the more harsh rights of the owner, and the blind submission of the slave, will inevitably, at some period more or less remote, come to an end. Deeply impressed with this conviction, his Majesty's government have endeavoured to make timely preparation for a change, which they believe could not be made abruptly without desolation and general ruin; and the calamity which we have at present to deplore is but an additional proof of the necessity of acting on so delicate a subject with this provident foresight, and of repressing those unhappy heats and prejudices which have so long obstructed the advance of the indispensable improvements, both of the law and of the state of slavery.

"I am not disposed to deny that the work of religious instruction may in some instances have been undertaken by men ill qualified for so arduous a task; and I am even ready, for the sake of argument, to adopt the improbable supposition that the pure truths of christianity may occasionally have been adulterated by instructions of a

instrument constantly in his hand, with which he is empowered to inflict, at his own discretion, a

seditious nature. Assume all this to be the case, and what is the proper inference? Not, assuredly, that the slaves be left to their native superstitions and idolatry, but that renewed exertions should be unremittingly made to diffuse amongst them more just apprehensions of religion, and clearer views of those moral obligations, to the enforcement of which all christian instruction should be subservient. Guided by these considerations, the government of this country proposed, and the two Houses of Parliament sanctioned, the enlargement of the church establishment in the West Indies on a liberal basis; and, in times of no common financial difficulties, that charge has been cheerfully sustained by the people of this kingdom. Under the influence of the same views many individuals owning property in Jamaica have subjected themselves to a large annual expenditure, to afford religious instruction to their slaves by clergymen of the established church, and, with a zeal worthy of all praise, have even undertaken the entire charge of missions to their own estates. In a similar spirit the religious societies connected with the church of England have devoted much of their funds, and directed the labours of many of their Missionaries, to the same field of exertion; and I cannot but indulge the hope, that by adapting her discipline to this new and peculiar state of society, and by inculcating among the slaves those sound views of christian truth and practice which she habitually recognizes, the church of England will confer upon our West India Colonies the inestimable benefit of such religious instruction as may at once satisfy the zeal of the most devout, and the scruples of the most cautious of the advocates for the conversion of slaves.

"It is not, however, merely to a misconception of religious truth, but to the direct instigation of some of the Missionaries that the recent insurrection is ascribed in some of the documents which your lordship has transmitted. I have observed with great satisfaction the efforts which you so judiciously made to guard the persons to whom it would belong to sit in judgement on the Missionaries, against the influence of religious prejudices; and I trust that the caution which you have given will effectually prevent the manifestation of any intemperate or hostile spirit towards them in any subsequent stage of the proceedings. I most distinctly avow my con-

certain number of lashes on their backs, with no exception whatever in favour of the softer sex.

viction that the improbability of the charge is so extreme, that nothing short of the most irresistible evidence could induce a belief of it. The Missionaries who engage in the office of converting the slaves in our colonies cannot, with charity, or in justice, be supposed to be actuated by any views of secular ambition or personal advantage. They devote themselves to an obscure, and arduous, and ill-requited service: they are well apprized that distrust and jealousy will attend them, and that the path they have chosen leads neither to wealth nor reputation. If, in their case, as in that of other men, motives less exclusively sacred than those which are avowed may exercise some influence on their minds, it were irrational either to feel surprise or to cherish suspicion on that account. The great ruling motive must, in general, be that which is professed, since, in general, there is no other advantage to be obtained than the consciousness of having contributed to the diffusion of christianity throughout the world. To suppose men who act habitually on such a principle, either so insensible to the restraints of conscience, or so perverted in their estimate of right and wrong, as to foment insurrection and civil war for the subversion of slavery, or to believe them insensible to the extreme danger and suffering in which, by engaging in such an enterprise, they must involve those for whose benefit the contest was to be undertaken, would argue rather a heated and prejudiced mind, than a discerning judgment and a correct acquaintance with human character. When, therefore, I consider that no motive can be rationally assigned which should have induced the Missionaries to embark in so guilty and desperate an undertaking, I cannot but earnestly trust, that the trial of any of their number, who may be charged with a participation in this rebellion, may have been postponed until comparative tranquillity should have succeeded to the first panic, and that such trials may have been conducted not before a military tribunal, but with all the regular forms of law. Should any such Missionary have been convicted, and he awaiting the execution of his sentence on the arrival of this despatch, your lordship will not permit that sentence to be carried into effect, till his Majesty's pleasure can be known."

The entire despatch from which the above is quoted, may be seen

During the four or five months of their harvest they are compelled to protect their labour through half the night, or through the whole of each alternate night. They are every moment liable to be removed, at the will of their masters, to the remotest parts of the island, or to be transported into other islands. The ties of kindred are violently torn asunder, and the mother and children often assigned to different purchasers, and separated to distant parts. The ordinance of marriage is scarcely known among them; while the most unrestrained licentiousness and profligacy of manners, as well in their intercourse with each other as with the whites, is indulged and encouraged.

The practice of emancipation, which has long prevailed to a great extent, and been followed by the happiest effects in the old Spanish colonies, is discountenanced by the laws of our colonies, and loaded with such heavy fines in some of them as almost to amount to a prohibition. The design of such regulations is unquestionably to confer perpetuity on the present system, and extinguish in the breast of the negroes the faintest hope of the enjoyment of freedom.

Nothing was wanting to complete the misery of such a state, except to attach absolute impunity to the atrocities which the unlimited subjection of the weak to the strong is sure to produce; and this is amply provided for by that regulation universally

in the "Jamaica Courant," of May 13, or "The Times," of June 22.—Ed.

adopted in our colonies, which excludes the testimony of a negro against a white inhabitant. In consequence of this law, the vilest miscreant may inflict whatever cruelties he pleases on the wretched blacks, providing he takes care that no white person be present. There are laws, it is true, which constitute the murder of a negro a capital offence, and which limit the measure of his punishment; but, as if for the very purpose of rendering them nugatory and ridiculous, conviction is made to depend on a circumstance attending the perpetration of crimes, which it is most easy to exclude. Thus, in opposition to the genius of all enlightened legislation, the greatest facilities are presented to oppression—the greatest impediments thrown in the way of detection—and, in all that relates to the treatment of slaves, the voice of truth is silenced, evidence suppressed, the claims of justice studiously defeated, and the redress of the most atrocious injuries rendered next to impossible.

There is another particular in the state of the laws respecting negroes too remarkable to be passed over in silence. It is the obvious dictate of justice, and the practice of all civilized states, that, till guilt is proved, innocence shall be presumed; and that the *onus probandi*, the obligation of adducing evidence, shall rest with the accuser in the first instance. In the West India islands the reverse of this is established, and every negro, or man of colour, though free, is *presumed* to be a slave, and liable to be treated as such, unless he can furnish documentary evidence of his freedom. It is en-

acted that the presumption shall always be taken against him: so that if he loses his certificate of freedom, or it is stolen from him, it is at the option of any person to claim him, and replunge him into the horrors of slavery. By this means many are daily deprived of their freedom; and the danger of incurring that calamity is daily suspended over the heads of the innocent.

It is no small aggravation of the cruelty of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of crime, but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores, and the embraces of their dearest relatives, in order to expose them to sale in a distant quarter of the globe. The forms of judicial inquiry, the examination of witnesses, the proof of guilt, and the sentence of a judge, were not the precursors of this most dire calamity; it was the assault of brutal violence on helpless weakness and unsuspecting innocence—it was the grasp of the marauder and the assassin, hurrying away his victims, amidst shrieks of horror and the piercing accents of despair, which prepared these scenes of woe. These, and the descendants of these, are the persons who compose the black population of our islands. Their number is computed at present at 800,000; and if we direct our view to that portion of the British dominions, we behold the shocking spectacle of nearly a million of our fellow-subjects, with no other imputation than

that of a darker skin, doomed to a condition which, were it assigned as the punishment of the greatest guilt, would be accused of immoderate severity. We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime.

It is confidently asserted by advocates of slavery, that the situation of the negroes in our islands is preferable to that of the labouring classes in England. But the falsehood of this assertion is sufficiently proved by the numerous elopements which take place there: on referring to a very recent Jamaica paper, we observe a list of more than a hundred runaway slaves; so that, admitting this to be a fair specimen of what usually occurs, the number of slaves who attempt to escape from their masters in one island only, amounts annually to five or six thousand. It appears that the far greater part were branded, many of them in different parts of the body, and not a few are designated by their wounds and sores, the effects of immoderate punishment. A moment's reflection must convince us, that the condition must be intolerable from which such numbers daily attempt their escape, at the hazard of tortures and of death.

We are in possession of a religion, the communication of which would afford some compensation for the injuries we have inflicted, and let in a ray

of hope on the benighted mind. To say that no effectual provision has been made for this purpose, is to assert the smallest part of the truth. The religious instruction of the negroes has not only been neglected, but such regulations introduced, as renders it nearly impracticable. The attempts of this sort which have been made, have not resulted from any legislative enactment, but merely from the zeal of private individuals, exposed for the most part to the utmost opposition and obloquy; nor will it admit of a doubt, that, but for the seasonable interference of the government at home, all such proceedings would long since have been suppressed. The colonial legislatures have displayed nearly as much aversion to the religious instruction of the slaves, as to the extension of their civil immunities; and, judging from their conduct, we should be tempted to infer, they were no less careful to exclude them from the hope of heaven, than from happiness on earth.

It would be natural to suppose, such a system could have few charms for the spectator, that the presence of such a mass of degradation and misery would be a source of continual annoyance, and that no exertion would be spared, by those who have it most in their power, to diminish its pressure, and lighten its horrors. On the contrary, the West India planters view it with the utmost complacency: in their eyes it seems to be a most finished and exquisite specimen of social order, a masterpiece of policy, the most precious legacy

bequeathed them by their ancestors, which they are bound to maintain inviolate in every part, to defend at the greatest risk, and to transmit unimpaired to future generations. They anticipate with the utmost confidence the perpetual duration of the system, and reprobate every measure which has the remotest tendency to endanger its existence, as the offspring of indescribable folly and wickedness. To such a degree are their moral perceptions vitiated, that they really believe they have a prescriptive right to be guilty of injustice, to trample on the image of their Maker, to erase his superscription, and to treat that portion of their species which fortune has subjected to their power, as mere beasts of burden, divested of the essential characteristics of humanity. In this instance, impious speculations have been resorted to in palliation of practical enormities; nor have there been wanting those who avow their persuasion that the negro is more nearly allied to the oran outang, than to the human kind.

Hence it appears that a state of slavery is in its operation as mischievous to the master as to the slave. If its effects on the latter are more visible in his corporeal structure, in his debased physiognomy, his dejected countenance, his lacerated skin, and not unfrequently in his "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores;" its effects on the mind of the former are not less perceivable, in the most inveterate prejudice, a pride which spurns the restraints of justice, a violence which is deaf

to the dictates of compassion—in a word, in a capricious and uncontrollable self-will, which lays waste all the finer sensibilities of the soul, and renders its possessor too often a rebel to his God, a torment to himself, and a terror to his fellow-creatures.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the abolition of the slave trade,* and during this period few or none of those improvements have taken place in the treatment of slaves, which were expected to result from that measure. At that time it was generally contended, that as the planters would be necessitated thenceforth to keep up the number of their slaves, without the aid of fresh importations, this itself would draw after it such an amelioration in the management of them, as would ensure the happiest results, without legislative interference. The interest of the proprietors, it was supposed, would so obviously coincide with the dictates of humanity, as to give these the force of law. It is too manifest, however, from the event, that in forming this conclusion we did not take sufficiently into account the short-sightedness of rapacity, the force of habit, the contagion of example, and the incurable propensity of human nature to abuse absolute power in whatever hands it is placed. The enormities which formerly characterized the slave system, have suffered little or no abatement; all its most odious peculiarities are

* The resolution of the House of Commons for the abolition of the slave-trade passed in June, 1806.—Ed.

retained, while, by the just retribution of Providence, the planters are reduced to the utmost embarrassment and distress.

After witnessing such an obstinate adherence to a system, equally injurious to the negroes and to themselves—after every suggestion of improvement has been indignantly rejected, and not a single effort made in behalf of the slave population, if we except a few verbal enactments, passed with no other view, it is evident from the event, than to elude inquiry and silence complaint—it would be more than vain, it would be foolish and preposterous, to look for any substantial redress from colonial legislators. *They* are the aggressors, *they* are the authors of the evils we complain of; and how can it be expected they should legislate against themselves? To leave the slaves in *their* hands, what is it less than to recommend the lamb to the protection of the wolf?

Slavery, considered as a perpetual state, is as incapable of vindication as the trade in slaves: they are integral parts of the same system, and, in point of moral estimate, must stand or fall together. If it be unjust to sell men into slavery, who are guilty of no crime, it must be equally so to retain them in that state; the last act of injustice is but the sequel and completion of the first. If the natives of Africa were originally despoiled of their freedom by rapine and violence, no man is entitled to avail himself of the condition to which they are reduced, by compelling them to labour for his

benefit; nor is it less evident, that they could not possibly transmit the forfeiture to their children of those rights which they never forfeited for themselves. Thus it appears, that the claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its *origin;* and, having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction of right.

But here we are most anxious to guard against the misrepresentation of our sentiments. Convinced as we are that negro slavery is most iniquitous in its origin, most mischievous in its effects, and diametrically opposite to the genius of christianity, and of the British Constitution, we are yet far from proposing a sudden revolution. Universal experience shews, that in the body politic, no less than in the natural, inveterate diseases admit only of a slow and gradual cure; and we should deprecate an immediate emancipation almost as much as the planters themselves, from a full conviction that the debasing operation of slavery long continued, disqualifies its subjects for performing the functions, and enjoying the immunities of a free citizen.

Our object is, in the first place, to produce such an amelioration of their treatment, as shall soften the rigour of their bondage; and, in the next, that provision for their moral and religious instruction, which, by developing their faculties, and improving their character, may ultimately qualify them for the possession of the freedom, of which they have

been cruelly deprived. With this view, we wish to see the competency of negro evidence established, as the only efficient check to wanton barbarity; the employment of rewards, as well as punishments; the instruction of the slaves in the principles of the christian religion; the uninterrupted enjoyment of the sabbath; the institution of marriage, and the inviolability of its rights firmly established; the exclusion of the cart-whip from the field of labour; together with the repeal of that abominable law, which renders them liable to be sold in execution for the payment of their master's debts. If, in addition to these most wholesome regulations, facilities were afforded for the purchase of their freedom, similar to those which have been adopted in the old Spanish colonies, with the happiest effect, freedoms would be gradually obtained, in such proportion and in such numbers only as would perfectly consist with the security and tranquillity of the colonies. Thus a race of freemen, fitted by their constitution and their habits for the employments of a tropical climate, united with us by civil and religious ties, would rise up in the room of the present wretched victims of oppression; a race, that having a country to preserve, and rights to defend, would be a source of national strength, instead of inspiring terror and distrust.

The superiority of free labour, in point of emolument, to the labour of slaves, having been demonstrated by such an ample induction of facts

that it may be safely classed with the most established maxims of political economy, the practice of gradual emancipation would be of essential benefit to the planters, and greatly augment the value of our West India possessions. Indeed, there cannot be a more cogent proof of the folly of pertinaciously adhering to the present system, than the acknowledged inability to sustain a competition with the growers of sugar in the East Indies. In order to raise the price of East India produce, so as to enable the planter in the West to keep the market, an extra duty is imposed to a large amount, and the people of England are obliged to pay upwards of two millions a year more for that article than would be necessary if a fair competition were allowed; in other words, the inhabitants of Great Britain are assessed to the amount of more than two millions annually, for no other purpose than to maintain the slave system in the West Indies; and, in opposition to the dictates of humanity, the precepts of religion, and the principles of political economy and impartial justice, we contribute more to perpetuate our own disgrace, than it would be deemed prudent to bestow in the purchase of the greatest blessing. All our plans of domestic improvement, joined to all the efforts which we make for the diffusion of religion and virtue in foreign nations, our schools, our Bible societies, and our missions, justly considered as the peculiar glory of the age, cost us a mere scantling, compared to what is

annually devoted to that very pious and benevolent object, the perpetuation of slavery in the West Indies;—we throw mites into the treasury of the sanctuary, and heap ingots on the altar of Moloch.

And why, it is natural to ask, why is it necessary to load the importation of sugar from the East Indies with such heavy duties, in order to enable the growers of the same article in an opposite quarter of the globe, at not one-third the distance, to sustain a competition? Purely because the East India sugar is produced by the labour of freemen, the West India by the labour of slaves. The industry of the former is animated by hope, that of the latter depressed by despair; one is sustained by the energies of nature, the other extorted by the mechanical operation of the lash; the former labour for themselves, the latter for their masters; and such is the distinction between these two species of industry, that it more than annihilates the local difference between three or four, and twelve thousand miles. Surely the good sense of the nation will at last awake to a perception of this flagrant enormity, and express its impatience at the ignominy and injustice of such an assessment, in that firm and constitutional tone which the legislature will not despise.

Let us not be discouraged if, in this great enterprise, our attempts are not immediately crowned with success. The slave-trade, be it remembered, was long upheld by a combination of private

interests, in opposition to the remonstrances of reason, humanity, and religion; but it fell at last. Such, unquestionably, will be the fate of slavery. It may, like its twin brother, be supported for a time, by that grand obstruction to all enlightened legislation, the opposition of interested individuals, who may obscure truth by sophistry, and intimidate justice by a formidable array of influence; but it is one of the felicities of a free country that nothing can be permanent which will not sustain the ordeal of inquiry and the shock of discussion.

We indulge a hope, though the measures of administration during the last session of parliament fell far short of our wishes, that it was from a want of resolution, more than of good intention; that they have formed on the whole a correct view of the subject, and that they are not unwilling to receive that support from the expression of the public mind, which a combination of private interests renders necessary. Be this as it may, as we are always answerable for the evils which it is in our power to prevent, and some of the greatest disorders in society have been corrected by the interference of the public, through its constitutional organs, we cannot continue passive spectators of a system, which inflicts interminable degradation and misery on eight hundred thousand of our fellow-subjects, without deeply partaking of its guilt.

The scene of their suffering is distant indeed, but not so remote as to exempt them from the operation of our laws; they form an integral part

of the British dominions, and woe to that nation which extends its power to those from whom it withholds its justice! That distance, which did not secure them from spoliation and captivity while in Africa, should not be allowed for a moment to intercept our attention to their welfare and commiseration of their sufferings, now that they are transported to the West Indies. Through the aid of the public voice, the government of the day carried triumphantly in 1806 the great question of the abolition of the slave-trade. Let us endeavour, by a simultaneous movement, to strengthen the hands of the present administration, if, as we hope, they are well disposed, to stimulate them if they are sluggish, and to propel them at all events in the right direction, by such a firm and unanimous display of the public sentiment and feeling on this great occasion, as no free government will think it proper to neglect; that we may, though late, make some reparation for the accumulated injuries of ages that are past, and signalize our connexion with Africa by other characters than those of rapine, violence, and blood.

We cannot suppose for a moment that government will suffer the extraordinary conduct recently displayed by the local authorities of Jamaica, to have any influence in preventing its adoption of such measures for the amelioration of the present system, as justice and humanity may dictate. To be bearded and insulted by persons in their situation would be mortifying enough, if the ridicule

attached to their proceedings did not interfere with more serious emotions. To say that government has nothing to fear from the West India islands would be scarcely correct, for we have much to fear; but it is not from their strength, but their weakness, which is such, that, were we to withdraw our support, they would fall, like ripe fruit, into the lap of the first invader. They are so much accustomed, it seems, to proceed by the method of intimidation, as to forget their absolute dependence on Great Britain for protection, as well from domestic as from foreign dangers; nor could we wish them a more cruel revenge, than to leave them to their own resources. If, by adopting such regulations as the humanity and wisdom of parliament shall prescribe, they can make it clearly appear that their pecuniary interests are affected, (which, in our opinion, will be impossible,) let them by all means receive a suitable compensation; but let us be permitted, at the same time, to express our hope that government will not be diverted from its course by the growling of a tiger, which refuses to quit its prey.

The interference, then, of an enlightened public, to circulate information, to strengthen the hands and second the movements of government, in this most just enterprise, is imperiously demanded. We cannot sit still, year after year, silent spectators of the most enormous oppression exercised within the limits of the British dominions, without partaking of its guilt. We cannot remain silent

and inactive, without forgetting who we are, and what we have done; that we are the country which, after a tedious struggle with a host of prejudices arrayed in support of opulent oppression, have overthrown the slave-trade, torn it up by the roots, and branded in the eyes of all nations the sale of human flesh, as the most atrocious of social crimes. We must forget that we are the countrymen of Granville Sharp, who, by incredible exertions, succeeded at length in purifying the British soil from this its foulest pollution, and rendered it for ever impossible for a slave to breathe its air. We must sever ourselves from all alliance of spirit with a Wilberforce and a Clarkson, who looked forward to the final emancipation of the negro race as the consummation of their labours, and were sustained in their arduous contest, by the joy which that prospect inspired. We must lose sight of still more awful considerations, and forget our great Original, "who hath formed of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth."

FRAGMENTS.

DEFENCE OF VILLAGE PREACHING,

HINTS ON TOLERATION,

THE RIGHT OF WORSHIP, &c.

[WRITTEN IN 1801, 1802, AND 1811.]

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

THE disquisition, of which the interesting Fragments now presented to the public are alone preserved, was commenced in 1801. About that time the late Bishop Horsley advanced the opinion, in various charges and sermons, (extracts from one of which are subjoined in a note,)* that the dissenters

* Extracts from Bishop Horsley's Charge, published in 1800.

After observing that the laity of England have as little relish for Socinianism as for Atheism, and that they think much alike of him who openly disowns the Son, and of him who denies the Father; insomuch that the advocates of this blasphemy have preached themselves out of all credit with the people, he proceeds as follows:—

"Still the operations of the enemy are going on; still going on by stratagem. The stratagem still a pretence of Reformation. But the Reformation the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead of divesting religion of its mysteries, and reducing it to a mere philosophy in speculation, and a mere morality in practice, the plan is now to affect a great zeal for orthodoxy; to make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence; to alienate the minds of the people from the established clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings; without any concern about the souls of men; indifferent to the religion which they ought to teach, and to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God. In many parts of the kingdom conventicles have been opened in great numbers, and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination. The pastor is often, in appearance at least, an illiterate peasant or mechanic. The congregation is visited occasionally by preachers from a distance. Sunday schools are opened in connexion with these conventicles. There is much reason to suspect that the expenses of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations formed in different places. For the preachers and schoolmasters are observed to engage in expenses for the support and advancement of their institutions, to which, if we may judge from appearances,

and methodists, in their attempts to introduce the preaching of the gospel in villages where the evangelical doctrines were not taught in the established church, were actuated by what were then termed "jacobinical" motives, and by a desire to

their own means must be altogether inadequate. The poor are even bribed, by small pecuniary gifts from time to time, to send their children to these schools of they know not what, rather than to those connected with the established church, in which they would be bred in the principles of true religion and loyalty. It is very remarkable that these new congregations of nondescripts have been mostly formed since the Jacobins have been laid under the restraints of those two most salutary statutes commonly known by the names of the Sedition and Treason Bills; a circumstance which gives much ground for suspicion that sedition and Atheism are the real objects of these institutions, rather than religion. Indeed, in some places this is known to be the case. In one topic the teachers of all these congregations agree; abuse of the established clergy, as negligent of their flocks, cold in their preaching, and destitute of the Spirit. In this they are joined by persons of a very different cast; whom, a candour of which they, on their part, set but a poor example, is unwilling to suspect of any ill design; though it is difficult to acquit them of the imputation of an indiscretion in their zeal, which, in its consequences, may be productive of mischief very remote, I believe, from their intention. It is a dreadful aggravation of the dangers of the present crisis in this country, that persons of real piety should, without knowing it, be lending their aid to the common enemy, and making themselves, in effect, accomplices in a conspiracy against the Lord and against his Christ. The Jacobins of this country, I very much fear, are, at this moment, making a tool of Methodism, just as the illuminées of Bavaria made a tool of free-masonry; while the real Methodist, like the real free-mason, is kept in utter ignorance of the wicked enterprise the counterfeit has in hand." Pp. 18—20.

In page 25, &c. the Bishop corrects a misrepresentation of a speech, delivered by him in the House of Lords, and gives the following as a faithful statement of it. "I said," says he, "that schools of Jacobinical religion and Jacobinical politics; that is to say, schools of Atheism and disloyalty, abound in this country;—schools in the shape and disguise of charity;—schools and Sunday schools, in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened; that is to say, taught to despise religion, and the laws, and all subordination.—This I know to be the fact. But, the proper antidote for the poison of the Jacobinical schools, will be schools for children of the same class under the management of the parochial clergy:—Sunday schools therefore, under your own inspection, I would advise you to encourage."—P. 26.

overthrow the episcopalian form of church government. This opinion, repeatedly announced in the oracular tone too often assumed by that learned prelate, obtained an extraordinary currency; and there was every reason to fear that some strong legislative measures for the prevention of these encroachments (as they were regarded) upon the functions of a parish minister, would be adopted. The necessity of such measures was urged again and again, with the utmost violence and intolerance, in several of the daily and other periodical publications; so that considerable apprehensions were naturally entertained that these exertions of christian benevolence would be altogether checked, or greatly restricted.

In such a state of things Mr. Hall commenced this essay; but, the public ebullition subsiding, he relinquished his design of publication, and indeed destroyed a portion of what he had written.

In the years 1810 and 1811, the friends of village preaching by dissenters, and of Sunday schools under their superintendence, were again alarmed by a fresh attempt to restrain their operations, though not undertaken in a hostile spirit, in an act brought into parliament by Lord *Sidmouth*. His Lordship proposed some new restrictions upon persons who wished to qualify as dissenting teachers, and others, either by separate licence, or by some other method, thought to be appropriate, on itinerant preaching. He also proposed to deprive lay-preachers of certain exemptions which had hitherto been granted. Against these measures petitions were sent to parliament from all parts of the kingdom; and the bill, being opposed by Lords *Grey*, *Holland*, *Erskine*, *Liverpool*, *Moira*, *Stanhope*, by Dr. Manners Sutton, then *Archbishop of Canterbury*, and by *Lord Chancellor Eldon*, was lost, May 21st, 1811, on the motion of Lord *Erskine*, which was agreed to without a division. The minds of those classes of the public that were interested in the diffusion of evangelical knowledge among the poor, were, however, agitated by this question for several months. In such a state of things, Mr. Hall determined to revise and complete what he had formerly begun; but the failure of

Lord Sidmouth's plan induced him again to lay aside his pen, and again to destroy great part of the manuscript. The portions which escaped destruction have been found since Mr. Hall's death. They want the advantage of entire continuity, as well as of the author's finishing touch; and, being composed at distant periods, and in part evidently rewritten, to suit the modification of the general purpose occasioned by the later attempts at restriction, they exhibit a slight repetition of sentiment. It has, however, been thought right to preserve the whole of them; as they unfold, and place in different lights, some valuable principles, of general application.

For a full account of the proceedings on Lord Sidmouth's bill, the reader may advantageously consult "A Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Deputies appointed to protect the Civil Rights of the Protestant Dissenters."

FRAGMENT ON VILLAGE PREACHING.

. . . . . WHERE they beheld the papal power overturned, they were ready to imagine the season was approaching, so clearly foretold, when true religion should emerge from the clouds of superstition which environed her and enlighten the world. Who will say that these hopes indicated depravity in the minds of those who cherished them too fondly? It was surely not very criminal to rejoice at the prospect of the extinction of evil and the universal prevalence of justice, peace, and happiness; or to mistake "the times and seasons which the Father has put into his own power." Good men were, of all others, least likely to suspect that their hopes would be blasted by a wickedness of which the world afforded no example. But whatever of this delusion might have prevailed heretofore, the virtuous part of the public are completely recovered from it; nor has it had the smallest influence in stimulating the exertions which it is the purpose of this publication to defend.

The only shadow of argument on which Bishop Horsley founds his accusation, that village preaching has a political object, is, that it has been

chiefly prevalent since the Pitt and Grenville bills, as they are styled, were passed; which put a stop to political meetings. Hence he infers that it is only a new channel into which the old stream is directed. Here, however, he is entirely mistaken. The true source of this increased activity is to be found in the missions, the first of which was established some years before the Grenville bills were passed. The attention of the religious public was strongly excited on that occasion to the indispensable necessity of "preaching the gospel to every creature," and the result was a resolution to exert more zealous and extensive efforts to diffuse the knowledge of saving truth at home than had before been employed. Agreeable to this, it will be found, on inquiry, that those who most distinguished themselves in political debates have had the least share (if they have had any) in promoting these measures; and that the invariable effect of engaging in these plans has been to diminish the attention bestowed on political objects. This indeed could not fail to be the consequence: for as the mind is too limited to be very deeply impressed with more than one object at a time, a solicitude to promote the interests of piety, must insensibly diminish the ardour for every thing that is not necessarily involved in it; not to say that the spirit of devotion, which such designs imply and promote, is peculiarly incompatible with the violence and acrimony of political passions. He who is truly

intent on promoting the eternal happiness of mankind, must look on futurity with so steady an eye, that he is in more danger of falling into indifference to the spectacle that is passing before him, than of suffering himself to be too much inflamed by it. He is under more temptation to desert his proper rank in society, to undervalue the importance of worldly activity, and to let opportunities of exertion slide through his hands, than to indulge turbulent and ambitious views.

Hence we find, in the first ages of the church, heathens made frequent complaints of the inactivity of christians, but never accused them of turbulence; and that while many fled into deserts, from austerity and devotion, not one, during the prevalence of paganism, endured the chastisement of the laws for sedition or treason. The pious of every age have been among the quiet of the land.

If our legislators are aware (as I hope they are) of the inconceivable benefits which are derived, in a political view, from the diffusion of pure and undefiled religion, no fascination of great talents or of high rank, no fear of misrepresentation or calumny, will tempt them to be guilty of a legislative suicide, by exerting their authority to suppress it; since nothing can ever give equal efficacy to the laws or stability to the government. The law, of itself, can only address fears; religion speaks to the conscience, and commands it to respect that justice on which the law is founded. Human law can only arm itself with penalties

which may be averted, despised, or endured; religion presents, in the displeasure of our Maker, an evil that can have no bounds. Human laws can only take cognizance of disorders in their last stage, proposing only the punishment of the delinquent, without attempting to prevent the crime: religion establishes a tribunal in our own breast, where that which is concealed from every other eye is arraigned, and the very embryo of crime detected and destroyed.

If we examine the sources of crimes, we shall perceive, the chief temptation to violate the principle of justice and humanity, arises from a discontent with the allotments of Providence; men are apt to attach an importance to what they see another possesses. But what can be so sovereign a cure for this discontent as religion, which teaches that all things are under the disposal of infinite wisdom; that life is but a passage to an eternal condition of being; that every thing the world admires is passing away, and that he only who "doeth the will of God abideth for ever?"

Religion must infallibly promote obedience to the laws, by subduing those violent passions which give birth to crimes. As our hopes and fears must all turn on the present scene, or on futurity, it is plain that a principle which throws an infinite weight into the latter scale must greatly diminish the influence of the former. On this account, real piety must ever be an enemy to intemperate enjoyments, and to extravagant hopes. In addition

to this, christianity enforces obedience to civil rulers with the utmost clearness and under the most solemn sanction, adopting the duties of a citizen into the family of religion, and commanding its disciples to revere civil government as the ordinance of God; and to be "subject, not chiefly for wrath, but for conscience sake." Who are so likely to be loyal subjects as those who consider lawful princes, in the exercise of their functions, as the representatives of the Supreme Ruler, and judges as the dispensers of the portion confided to them of eternal justice? The public may be assured, that as nothing is more remote from the views of those who are most active in promoting village preaching than an intention to promote political discontent, so nothing is more removed from the practice of the preachers. That there may be an imprudent or an unprincipled individual who profanes the function of a preacher by introducing political remarks (a practice too common with those who are loudest in the condemnation of dissenters) is possible; though it has never been my lot to hear of any among our village preachers; but that such instances are extremely rare, and when they occur never fail to be discountenanced in the strongest manner, both by dissenters and methodists, may be affirmed with the utmost confidence. There is no maxim more constantly inculcated by all who have any influence in these measures, than that of scrupulously abstaining from every, even the remotest,

allusion to politics. They have preached liberty indeed, but it is that liberty which Jesus Christ proclaimed at Nazareth, that holy and divine liberty with which the Son makes his followers free; not that liberty whose thrilling accents awake nations to arms, but that which is enjoyed in the highest perfection in the quiet of the sanctuary, where all is still; as in the temple of Solomon, the sound of the lifted hammer was not heard. They propose a revolution, but it is that by which men are translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God and his Christ. They propose great innovations, but such as consist in exhorting men to newness of heart.

His Lordship expresses his approbation of Sunday schools, provided they are placed under the inspection and control of the clergy. If the clergy will take the trouble of forming and inspecting Sunday schools, they may confer a great benefit on the public, and gain much honour to themselves: whether the nation will tamely submit to have the business of education exclusively in the hands of any one set of men, remains to be tried. The attempt to support an ecclesiastical establishment, by invading the freedom of education, resembles more the policy of a Julian than the gentleness of Christ. To invade the freedom of charity is a stretch of tyranny still more odious. To control the movements of benevolence, and construe the impulse of compassion into a crime, is such an outrage as can only be paralleled in the

darkest ages, and in the most barbarous minds. Of what crimes have the dissenters been convicted, we will boldly ask; of such infamy that even the exercise of benevolence in them must wear the aspect of guilt; and that they must be degraded, not only beneath the rights of citizens, but the possibilities of virtue? What have these helots of England done to deserve this more than Spartan cruelty? In the name of eternal justice, I invoke the injured majesty of our common nature to repel an attack so injurious, founded on aspersions so foul and detestable.

It is asserted that these revolutionary designs are carried on under pretences of superior piety. It is matter of accusation, that the dissenters make these pretences. If the dissenters, however, profess to have more piety than the members of the established church, it will be shrewdly suspected to arise from a very plain reason, namely, that they have more. Hypocrisy is the vice of individuals, not of numerous bodies of men, who can have no motive sufficiently extensive in its operation to engage them to submit to its restraints. The same conclusion results from another consideration. Nothing but a conscientious preference can, generally speaking, incline a man to a mode of religious profession which in the mildest times is unpopular, and at some seasons not exempt from danger and disgrace. Without contending for any superiority in the principles of dissent, the very circumstance of becoming a

dissenter, or of continuing such, at some expense of worldly reputation and advantage, indicates a mind over which religious considerations have great influence. They who never scarcely think of religion at all, or who abandon themselves to the tide of opinion and fashion, are safely conducted into the haven of the established church. To be content with merely being tolerated, instead of sharing the honours and emoluments of an opulent establishment, to have all the avenues which lead to greatness shut against them, is a sacrifice which nothing but conscientious piety, however mistaken, can prompt them to make. In addition to which, it may be remarked, that a religious minority, from a conviction that their conduct will be exposed to a severe scrutiny, and that nothing can sustain them against the contempt of the world but superior correctness of morals, have a motive for cherishing the spirit of their institution which others want.

On these accounts it will not, we hope, be deemed presumptuous if we take it for granted, that the dissenters, and especially that class of them who have signalized their zeal for the religious instruction of the poor, have really more piety than falls to the share of the great body of the people of England. But how is it possible for pious men to enter into a conspiracy to overturn the constitution of their country, and to overwhelm every thing in anarchy? For this purpose they must unite themselves intimately with the

infidel faction: they must make common cause with those detestable monsters whose pestilential breath has blasted, in other countries, every thing cheering to the eye or refreshing to the heart. They must forget the infinite contrariety of principle which divides them; they must forget the daggers of these assassins, which, after destroying their enemies, they never fail to turn against their associates, impelled by an insatiable eagerness for destruction. They must put their fortune, their character, their life, in the hands of men with whom it would not be safe to trust themselves in a room. There is nothing more opposite than the spirit of piety and the spirit of faction. There enters into the composition of faction, a meddlesome and mischievous activity, blended with a callousness of heart; devotion softens the temper. Faction knows no delicacy in the choice of its society: it wants no other qualities in its associates than turbulence and discontent, a conscience which no crimes can startle, and an impudence which no detection can confront: devotion, alarmed at wickedness, and disgusted with folly, is apt to carry the principle of selection too far. Faction delights in scenes of tumult and noise; devotion in solitude and retirement. Faction busies itself with forming external movements, and values itself only on the change it produces in the situation of external objects: the treasures and conquests of religion are internal. Faction draws its nourishment from an overweening

conceit of superior wisdom, accompanied with a proportionable contempt of the understanding and virtue of other men. The solid foundation of piety is laid in humility, or a deep conviction of our sinfulness and fallibility. I will not say that men of real piety have never been betrayed into factious enterprises; or have not, on some occasions, pushed their opposition to government too far; but it may be safely affirmed, that whenever they have done so, it must have arisen from an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances; generally from the oppression which makes a wise man mad: that it is most foreign to their genuine character, and that nothing is a more effectual antidote to political turbulence than the prevalence of piety.

Before we proceed further, I must be permitted to lament that propensity to credit and propagate the most hideous calumnies, which seems to have arisen to an unprecedented height in this age. It may answer a temporary purpose, but it is well if it does not recoil on those who employ it. It resembles the policy of insurrections and riots, which, though they may occasionally punish or crush an obnoxious sect, no wise government will adopt, for fear of a reaction. To fill the minds of the public with hatred, jealousies and suspicions, is to poison the fountains of public security. When this spirit is once awakened among a people, the character and conduct of its rulers seldom fail, in the long run, to be injured by it. Under

disasters which the utmost wisdom cannot prevent, under burdens which the strictest economy may impose, government presents a plain, a palpable, and permanent pretext of discontent and suspicion. Misery finds a sort of relief in attributing its sufferings to the conduct of others, and while it soothes its anguish by resentment and clamour, it fastens on the object that first presents itself. This object will naturally be the rulers of the nation. Nor is there any thing with respect to which men are more liable to be mistaken, than the share which the imprudence or misconduct of civil government has in the production of public calamities. So various, so subtle, so complicated in their operation are the causes which conduct to prosperity or decline in the affairs of nations, that it is a matter of the utmost delicacy to determine what share is to be assigned to human agency, and what to contingencies and events. This obscurity furnishes infinite scope for the exercise of candour in the well disposed, and for the indulgence of suspicion and discontent in the factious. In scenes so complicated, and when the steps are so numerous and so untraceable between the first movement and the last, it is equally difficult to form a right estimate of events, when we are very remote, or when we are very near them. If we attempt to survey a remote æra, we are lost in naked generalities; when we turn our eyes on the scene before us, our attention is apt to be limited to detached parts; we are apt to confound proximate

with remote causes, to mistake casual coincidence for natural connexion, and to give a disproportionate importance to whatever we immediately feel. Let them who have any doubt of the dreadful effects of calumny, look at what took place in France, where they will find it was the principal engine employed by the Brissotines to overturn the monarchy, and afterwards by Robespierre to deluge that devoted country with blood. By inspiring everlasting jealousies and unbounded fears, he contrived to extirpate every remain of tenderness and pity, and to preserve the minds of the people in constant agitation, like the sea in a storm. It was this that whetted the daggers of assassins. It was the withering blast of this spirit that destroyed every thing amiable and noble in that unhappy kingdom, resigned to the desolating sway of selfishness and revenge. Nothing can be more fatal to public repose; nothing can tend more immediately to quicken the seeds of convulsion. That this malignant leaven should be infused into the public mind by any hands, must be matter of deep regret; that it should be mingled and prepared by those hands from which the world is wont to look for benedictions and blessings, seems awful and portentous.

Let not this, however, be understood to intimate that there is any room to apprehend the dissenters may be provoked to verify the suspicions and calumnies to which they are incessantly exposed. The writer would be understood to speak merely

of the tendency of such infusions on the nation at large; not at all of their influence on the dissenters or methodists. Their loyalty is of too fine a texture to be affected by the efflux or influx of public opinion. While they enjoyed the countenance of the public, their loyalty was sustained by a higher motive than popularity, nor will any discouragement tempt them to forfeit it. In the mean time they place a firm reliance, first on the protection of Heaven, the judge of their innocence, next on the impartial justice and parental kindness of their gracious sovereign, to prevent them from being overwhelmed and swallowed up by the reproaches of their enemies.

Enough has been said on this head, I trust, to satisfy every unprejudiced person, that nothing is more remote from the design of these institutions than the promotion of seditious or revolutionary plans.

It is time to proceed to a distinct charge, which is that of hostility to the church of England. It is confidently asserted by the prelate, to whom we have so often had occasion to allude, that it is the constant practice of itinerant preachers to calumniate the clergy, by representing them as a set of hirelings, destitute of the spirit of piety, and utterly indifferent to the welfare of their flocks; by which artifices they alienate the affections of the people from the established pastors, and prepare them for becoming dissenters; or what, in the dialect of the learned prelate, is the same thing, schismatics.

Although it is extremely disagreeable to be obliged to contradict a positive assertion in a manner equally positive, yet truth compels us on this occasion to declare, that the statement here made is without any sort of foundation in truth. The practice of vilifying the established clergy is so far from being commonly adopted in the discourses, either of dissenters or methodists, that it may be safely affirmed, if there are any instances of conduct so highly improper, they are extremely rare, and that where the dissenters offend in this particular once, the established clergy are guilty of it ten times. It is a practice which the late Mr. Wesley discouraged, in his connexion, to the utmost; nor are the dissenters, as a body, less scrupulous and delicate on that head. Still, however, it will be said, a principle of hostility to the established church seems inseparable from these exertions; the tendency of preaching in the parishes of authorized ministers must be to alienate the people from the established mode of worship, and, in the issue, to endanger the existence of the national church.

As this objection wears a more plausible appearance than any other, and has been urged in a great variety of forms, the author must beg the patience of the reader, while he gives it a full and distinct examination.

1. The objection we are considering seems to imply, on the part of those who urge it, an inattention to the true genius and design of a religious

establishment. We must distinguish between the design of religion itself, and the design of that support which is given to it by human laws. The design of religion itself is to discipline the mind and prepare the heart for the happiness of heaven. The design of supporting a particular form of religion by law, is much less extensive; it is to derive from it that security which it never fails to confer on the interests of civil society. This may be termed the indirect benefit of religion; with a view to which the policy of legislation has thought it right to incorporate it with human laws. The establishment of a religion is not to be considered as a final end. In respect to importance it is never to be confounded with religion, or even to be placed on a level with the peace and good order of society, to which it ought ever to be in perfect subordination. It aims at nothing farther than to secure such a prevalence of religion as shall make men conscientious and upright. By whatever means this is accomplished, the true design of every religious establishment is answered. From the indisposition of mankind to direct their thoughts to a futurity; from their proneness to immerse themselves in present and sensible objects; and the ignorance which follows of course, it has been thought necessary to set apart a particular order of men to inculcate its truths, and to exemplify its duties. Laws will not be obeyed, harmony in society cannot be maintained, without virtue; virtue cannot subsist without religion. The sen-

timents of religion, it is thought, will be effaced from the mind by the influence of worldly passions and pursuits, unless it is recognized by the sovereign, and public teachers appointed by the state.

Whoever attends to this must perceive that the establishment was intended, not to correct an excess, but to supply a defect; not to prevent men from becoming too devout, but to preserve them from falling into irreligion and vice. It was not because men are too much disposed to be religious, but because they are too apt to forget it, that our forefathers thought proper to give it a legal establishment. On a similar principle, universities were established, and colleges endowed, to stimulate literary ardour, and facilitate the means of acquiring knowledge; and not that it might be made a crime to receive instruction in any other place. If peculiar privileges and honours were conferred on these seminaries, it was not with a view to limit, confine, and discourage, but to animate the exertions of literary talent. If they seemed to narrow the stream, it was only with a view to deepen the current.

To attempt to restrain the prevalence of religion, to suppress the efforts of good men for the promotion of piety, under pretence of guarding the established church, is to lose sight of the design of all religion, and to counteract the purpose for which the establishment of it in particular was made. It would be to found the security of the church on the ruins of religion.

2. They who urge the objection seem not to have reflected sufficiently on the prodigious advantages which the church of England possesses for securing its existence and prosperity. The large portion of property it holds gives it a great national weight and importance. The regular gradations of authority and rank cement its several parts closely together, and prepare it on all occasions to act with the utmost promptitude and unanimity. Its ministers, vested with legal authority and character, are the natural objects of a veneration, of which nothing but personal misbehaviour can deprive them.

Mankind are apt to be strongly prejudiced in favour of whatever is countenanced by antiquity, enforced by authority, and recommended by custom. The pleasure of acquiescing in the decision of others is by most men so much preferred to the toil and hazard of inquiry, and so few are either able or disposed to examine for themselves, that the voice of law will generally be taken for the dictates of justice.

Nor is it the weakness only of mankind that inclines them to look with a favourable eye on what is established; some of the most amiable propensities of the heart lean the same way,—deference to superior wisdom and to great names; the love of quiet, and the dread of confusion and disorder. These considerations will prevail over minds which are too virtuous to be moved by a gross self-interest. Further, the religion of the

state will ever be the religion of the vain and aspiring. A degree of ridicule never fails to be attached to a religious minority. In all the efforts of churchmen, their movements are facilitated by the current of public opinion, while dissenters are on every occasion obstructed by public prejudice. Thus churchmen set out with a partiality on their side, which nothing but neglect and misconduct can destroy; dissenters, with a weight of suspicion and dislike, which nothing but discreet and exemplary behaviour can remove.

If we contemplate, in connexion with the subject we are upon, the manners and institutions of the British nation, we shall perceive that the established church in these kingdoms possesses such pledges of its safety, as are not to be found in any protestant community besides. A finished English education is, in all its stages, clerical; the public seminaries of instruction, together with the two universities, being almost entirely under the conduct of ecclesiastics; by which means a reverence for the church is imbibed with the first elements of knowledge. Its splendid literary establishments, its magnificent libraries the accumulation of ages, and, above all, the great and illustrious names it has produced in every department of genius and of learning, the glory of the world; who have conferred dignity, not so much on their profession as on their species; gives it, in a literary view, a decided superiority, and in popular opinion an exclusive esteem. The policy of modern times

has, in addition to this, confided to its ministers more and more of the administration of the laws, in which they are become the immediate organs of justice to the people; and the claims of spiritual authority are hence enforced by the habits of civil submission.

Freed from the fetters of celibacy, which, if they augment its zeal, must narrow its influence in popish countries, it strikes its roots deep into the social soil, and forms numerous alliances, so that there is scarcely a considerable family in the nation which is not immediately interested in its support. A popish clergy, secluded from the enjoyments of domestic life, may be expected, indeed, to have a more eager ambition for the advancement of their order, in consequence of their passions being all directed to one point; but as their manners must be less amiable, so, from this insulated condition, they are liable to fall without a struggle and without pity. They are a loose appendage of the state, not a part of its growth and substance. With respect to the English clergy it is quite otherwise. As they are continually receiving supplies from the mass of the community, so they are continually restoring to it, in the persons of their sons and daughters, what it has lost. By these means a continual communication is maintained with the body of the people, manners are assimilated, and the ties of tenderness and attachment extended. The gradations of rank, also, which are established in it, contribute to the same purpose,

and exhibit an image of the political constitution planted in every corner of the kingdom, and mingled with every order of the state; while its inferior members propagate its influence among the commonalty, it allies itself on the side of its dignitaries with all that is august, basks in the smile of monarchs, and shares in the splendour of courts.

A society which has such numerous pledges for its security, which so many motives concur to favour, so many passions to support, must be guilty of some extraordinary misconduct before it can forfeit the attachment of the people. It is evident it can only fall under the weight of its own abuses.

3. It is possible, indeed, to conceive a degree of secularity and dissipation which may first greatly impair its influence, and finally endanger its existence. In an age not remarkable for credulity or superstition, as the conduct of ecclesiastics will have more weight than their pretensions, nothing can long secure them from popular contempt, but exemplary morals and diligence.

To invest idleness and dissipation with the privileges of laborious piety, is an impracticable attempt. For by a constitution more ancient than that of any priesthood, superior degrees of sanctity and of exertion will gain superior esteem as their natural reward. We must not wonder to find the public forget the reverence due to the sacred profession, when its members forget the spirit, and

neglect the duties, on which that reverence was founded. The natural equity of mankind will not suffer the monopoly of contradictory goods. If the people are expected to reverence an order, it must be from the consciousness of benefits received. If the clergy claim authority, it must be accompanied with a solicitude for the spiritual interest of their flocks, and [that pastoral] labour [be well] sustained. To enjoy, at once, both honour and ease, never fell to the share of any profession. If the clergy neglect their charge, if they conform to the spirit of the world, and engage with eagerness in the pursuits of ambition or of pleasure, it will be impossible for any human policy to preserve them from sinking in the public esteem.

4. As far as the attachment of the people to their established ministers is diminished in consequence of misconduct on their part, it will not be remedied by excluding other instructors. To deprive them of every other means of information may make them heathens, but will not make them churchmen. The established ministers are either equal to others in zeal and diligence, or inferior. If they are equally laborious and exemplary, what have they to fear, while they have every advantage in their possession which superior learning, a legal character, and the countenance of their superiors can confer? To assert that the same degree of diligence and piety in a clergyman will not produce an equal effect as when they are exerted by a dissenter, is to yield the cause of

the establishment at once; for it is to affirm that there is a source of weakness in the very nature of an establishment, which prevents equal means in other respects from being equally influential; an extraordinary assertion, which the friends of the established church would be, we should suppose, the last to make. The policy of an establishment is founded on a supposition, that it is the most effectual mode of inculcating some degree of religion, and of impressing sentiments of piety on the minds of men. But if, on the contrary, it be found that exertions merely equal made in any other form produce more powerful effects, that supposition is invalidated, and the structure raised upon it falls to the ground. To give religion a legal subsistence, it seems, by this reasoning, is so far from arming it with superior energy, that it is, of all the modes under which it can appear, the most disadvantageous, and ignorance and fanaticism gain an easy triumph over it.

If the other supposition be taken, that the established ministers are inferior to others in diligence and exertion, and that on this account their popularity is endangered; to give them the monopoly of religious instruction is to violate every principle of reason and equity. It is punishing the innocent for the faults of the guilty. It is to reward a breach of trust with an enlargement of power. Instead of quickening indolence, or correcting abuse, it is conferring impunity on both. The natural remedy

for whatever inconveniences are experienced or apprehended from established abuses, is the institution of discipline and the exercise of wholesome correction by the rulers of the church, who are invested with adequate power for that purpose. To look out and ask for an external force to repel the consequences of an inward disease; to demand the interposition of the legislature to protect them from the effects of their own abuses, while they refuse the proper remedy, is repugnant to every maxim of justice. They ought at least to wait until the abuses they complain of are remedied; until the internal resources of reformation are employed. With little propriety or grace can they complain of impertinent intruders, who are inattentive to the duties of their allotted station. In the report of the Lincolnshire clergy* it is frankly acknowledged that much of the decline of religion is to be imputed to the neglect of the clergy; and yet, almost in the same breath, they express a desire that the legislature would give them power to expel intruders from their parishes. It has usually been expected that superior claims should be founded, at least, on the pretence of superior merits. But here the order of things is reversed. At the very moment they are asking for an increase of power, they confess themselves unworthy of it, by having abused, or neglected to employ, the power already intrusted into their hands. Not content to escape without punishment, they ask

* Circulated in 1801 or 1802.—Ed.

to be rewarded for a breach of ecclesiastical trust, and the want of clerical virtues. Whatever we may think of their delicacy, we cannot but commend their prudence, in not putting their names to such a paper.

5. It deserves to be considered what effect the prohibition of other instruction is likely to have on the conduct of the clergy themselves. Is it likely to diminish or increase the frequency of non-residence, or the extent of secular and dissipated habits? Will it tend to augment their professional diligence and zeal, the surest support of an ecclesiastical order? Will the monopoly of religious instruction fail to produce the effect of all other monopolies? While men are accustomed to compare rival pretensions; while emulation continues to be classed among human passions, these questions will admit but of one answer. A generous competition is the animating spirit of every profession, without which it droops and languishes. If we look around us we shall perceive that all the discoveries which have enriched science, and the improvements which have embellished life, are to be ascribed to the competition of nations with nations, of cities with cities, and of men with men. From causes too obvious to need explanation, there is less of this spirit in the clerical profession than in any other; which is the principal reason of the talent of preaching having been so little cultivated.

It is easy to see, then, what will be the consequence of extinguishing the small remains of

emulation or jealousy, call it by what name you please, which springs from the complete toleration of a diversity of sects. If the dread of intrusion (as it is called) into their parishes is not sufficient to prevent some from neglecting their pastoral duties, this neglect will be much more profound when there is nothing to disturb their repose. When the minister fears no rival, and the people despair of any remedy, the inattention of the one and the ignorance of the other will increase in equal proportion.

THE IMPOLICY OF INTOLERANCE.

THERE is another objection frequently urged against village preaching, which will deserve our attention. It is alleged that the gross fanaticism which distinguishes the self-appointed teachers of religion tends to bring christianity into contempt, and threatens the most serious mischief to the cause of enlightened piety. That fanaticism is an evil, and that a considerable portion of it may frequently be blended with those efforts to revive religion for which we are pleading, will not be denied. A little reflection, however, may convince us that the danger from this quarter is not so alarming as might be apprehended at first sight.

Fanaticism, as far as we are at present concerned with it, may be defined such an overwhelming impression of the ideas relating to the future world as disqualifies for the duties of life.

1. From the very nature of fanaticism it is an evil of short duration. As it implies an irregular movement, or an inflamed state of the passions, when these return to their natural state it subsides. Nothing that is violent will last long! The vicissitudes of the world, and the business of life, are admirably adapted to abate the excesses of religious enthusiasm. In a state where there are such incessant calls to activity, where want presses, desire allures, and ambition inflames, there is little room to dread an excessive attention to the objects of an invisible futurity.

A few rare examples of this kind might perhaps be found, by diligent inquiry, over which infidelity would triumph and piety drop a tear. It is not uncommon, however, to find those who, at the commencement of their religious course, have betrayed symptoms of enthusiasm, become in the issue the most amiable characters. With the increase of knowledge, the intemperate ardour of their zeal has subsided into a steady faith and fervent charity, so as to exemplify the promise of scripture, that "the path of the just" shall be "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As the energy of the religious principle is exerted in overcoming the world; so that variety of action and enlarged experience which the business of life supplies, serves to correct its excesses and restrain its aberrations.

There are some who, proscribing the exercise of the affections entirely in religion, would reduce

christianity to a mere rule of life; but as such persons betray an extreme ignorance of human nature, as well as of the Scriptures, I shall content myself with remarking, that the apostles, had they lived in the days of these men, would have been as little exempt from their ridicule as any other itinerants. If the supreme love of God, a solicitude to advance his honour, ardent desires after happiness, together with a comparative deadness to the present state, be enthusiasm, it is that enthusiasm which animated the Saviour, and breathes throughout the Scriptures.

2. In admitting that a portion of enthusiasm may possibly be blended with the efforts to revive serious religion alluded to, we are far from meaning to insinuate that that is their distinguishing character; or that those who exert themselves in that way can, as a body, be justly classed with fanatics. The far greater part are men of good natural sense united to fervent piety. If not possessed of the advantages of a learned education, they are by no means ignorant. They have living knowledge. Familiarly conversant with the Bible, they are men of devotional habits, and of exemplary conduct. The insulting epithets applied to such men might naturally provoke retaliation, and lead to an inquiry how far the learning, so ostentatiously displayed, is connected with religious knowledge; when it would perhaps be found that some of their revilers are better able to solve a geometrical problem than a theological difficulty,

and are better acquainted with the epistles of Horace than those of St. Paul. But, as it is my wish strenuously to avoid whatever might awaken angry passions, I forbear to press these inquiries.

Enthusiasm is an evil much less to be dreaded than superstition. The latter is a disease of opinion, which may be transmitted with fresh accumulation of error from age to age. It is the spirit of slumber in which whole nations are immersed. Placing religion, which is most foreign to its nature, in depending for acceptance with God on absurd penances or unmeaning ceremonies, it resigns the understanding to ignorance and the heart to insensibility. No generous sentiments, no active virtues, ever issue from superstition.

Superstition is the disease of nations, enthusiasm that of individuals; the former grows more inveterate by time, the latter is cured by it.

We hope the remembrance of popish cruelties is not so far effaced from the minds of our countrymen as to permit them to see the forge of the giant without terror.

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On Toleration.

We have arrived at the last part of our subject, which relates to the expediency and justice of legal interference in the suppression of these

attempts. And here I feel a solicitude lest I should give a wrong touch to the ark of religious liberty, and injure the cause which I wish to promote.

1. Toleration of a diversity of worship has now been legally established and uninterruptedly practised for more than a century; during which we have enjoyed a degree of internal peace and prosperity unexampled in any former age. This, which was the thing most wanted to perfect the constitution, has softened and harmonized the spirits of men, has mitigated the fierceness of religious factions, and has made them of one heart and mind in the love of their country and attachment to its sovereign. The national wealth has been augmented, commerce extended, arts invented or improved, and society embellished with an additional portion of elegance and humanity. The resources of public strength have been enlarged, and the nation has become more formidable in war and more respected in peace. The struggles of party produce no other effects than clamorous invective and intrigue; and public rumour, instead of being occupied with the horrors of civil commotion, announces the intelligence of the fall of the ministry, or some new arrangement in the cabinet. This toleration has materially advanced the interest of the established church itself, by abating the acrimony of its adversaries, and affording room for the display of talent in other communities, the surest prevention of indolence in its own.

The principles of toleration also harmonize with that refinement of thinking and spirit of research which has distinguished the last century; in consequence of which this important advantage has been reaped, that the opinions of the speculative, which always have ultimately great effect, coincide with the practice of the constitution. Hence it is that England may be considered as the native soil of bold original minds; nor is there any danger of our being reasoned into a dislike of the constitution.

And shall we endanger the loss of all these advantages by adopting a new course of policy? What security will they afford us, who invite us to tread in new and perilous paths? What security will they afford us, that the same tranquillity and the same prosperity will accompany us in so great a change; when the very essence of the constitution shall have been altered, and the very words which Englishmen were proud to pronounce expunged from the vocabulary?

A dread of innovation has hitherto prevented the correction of some flagrant abuses; yet it is rather extraordinary that some of those who profess to have most of that dread are among the most clamorous for an innovation in the toleration act.

But is not this a most serious innovation? Must we then understand these men to mean that they are only enemies to such innovations as are on the side of liberty, and that they are prepared to

trample on the most fundamental laws, to promote persecution and tyranny? With such men it is to little purpose to expostulate; we leave them to the enjoyment of that calm sunshine which must fill the hearts of men of so much purity and benevolence.

To others it may be proper to suggest, that if innovations are dangerous, they are not equally so, and that there is a great difference betwixt innovations which favour the spirit of a constitution, and those that contradict it. The former may be compared to the natural growth of the human body, the latter to the violent dismemberment of its parts. The former completes an imperfect analogy; the latter destroys just proportions. The former is the removal of an obstruction which prevents the equable motion of the machine; the latter occasions the collision of interfering principles. When oppressive laws are engrafted on a free constitution, the contrast of liberty and tyranny will make the oppression to be doubly felt. In such a situation, the free and undaunted spirit which the constitution has cherished suffers violence. The precedents of past times, the examples of their ancestors, the fundamental principles of the constitution, have taught them to consider themselves as free. By the proposed laws they are instructed to look upon themselves in a new light. They are commanded to unlearn all that they have learned, to descend from the dignity of freemen to the abject condition of a slave.

Slavery may exist where freedom is unknown, without endangering the public tranquillity: in some countries perhaps without destruction of public happiness. But the slightest invasion of the liberties of a free country awakens a jealousy and resentment which are not easily appeased. Let those then who are alarmed at the danger of innovation, seriously reflect on the possible consequences of an innovation so momentous. A free and a despotic state may both be compatible with liberty; but who ever would voluntarily make the transition from one to the other?

2. The liberty of worshipping God in that manner which the conscience of every individual dictates, provided nothing be introduced into worship incompatible with good morals, may be justly claimed as an inalienable right. The relation which subsists betwixt man and his Maker, and the consequent obligation to worship him, is prior to the civil relation between magistrates and subjects. It is a more important relation, since all the good a creature can enjoy is derived from it, and all his reasonable hopes of happiness on the goodness of the Almighty. It differs, too, from every other, in that it is invisible, perpetual, and eternal. A man may or may not be the member of a civil community, but he is always the creature of God. For these reasons, political duties, or those which result from the relation of the subject to the prince, must, in their nature, be subordinate to religious. When the commands of a civil supe-

rior interfere with those which we conscientiously believe to be the laws of God, submission to the former must be criminal; for the two obligations are not equipollent, but the former is essential, invariable, and paramount to every other: "Whether it be right," said the apostles, "to obey God or man, judge ye." But if an active obedience in such circumstances be *criminal*, to prescribe it cannot be *innocent*, since it would be absurd to affirm that exercise of authority to be right to which it is wrong to submit. Rights and duties are correlatives. A right to command necessarily implies the enforcing that which is right with respect to those to whom the duty of submission belongs. Nor is it to any purpose to allege that the worship prescribed is rational and scriptural, and far more excellent than that which is prohibited. For if we remember that worship is no other than the outward expression of the love and fear of God, we must perceive, that to become acceptable, it is above all things necessary that it be such as approves itself to the mind of the worshipper; such as he sincerely believes will be pleasing to God. It is impossible to please God without a sincere intention to please him. We may hope, from him who knows our frame, for a merciful indulgence to the imperfections which spring from involuntary ignorance or latent prejudice. It agrees with his benignity to suppose he will graciously accept that worship which is not the best in itself, providing it be the best we

know how to present. But to worship with those rites and ceremonies which our conscience does not approve, however excellent in themselves, is an insult to the Deity. A Jew, for example, who joined in the worship of a christian church, while he retained the incredulity which distinguishes his nation, would be guilty of the highest impiety; nor would it be any extenuation of his fault to allege that the worship in which he assisted was founded on scripture, and commanded by God, while his conviction was contrary. He who is utterly careless of the favour of God, and without any solicitude respecting a future world, will naturally follow the stream of authority or fashion, and adopt any mode of religion which happens to have the ascendency. But the sincere worshipper of God will find it impossible to comply with any religious injunctions which appear to him to interfere with the will of God.

Besides, as is urged with great force by Mr. Locke, if the magistrate of one country has a right to impose his religion under pains and penalties, the magistrates of all other countries must have an equal right. Religious truth will vary with the boundaries of nations; and with equal justice the Pope will be revered in Spain, Mahomet in Turkey, and Brahma in India. It is easy to see to what those principles tend, which imply that there is nothing determinate, nothing sacred in religion, and that all modes of worship are equally pleasing to God, and equally useful. The

principles of persecution, pushed to their just consequence, terminate in Hobbism.*

It is worth while to consider what is likely to be the effect of enacting coercive laws in religion. If the men at whom they are aimed are conscientious they will still persevere. They will reply to the injunction of silence, what the apostles did to the chief priest, "whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." They will still persist in their attempts to evangelize the poor. This will necessitate the exercise of greater severities, the failure of which will be considered as a demand for punishments still heavier, until the magistrate has proceeded to banishment, confiscation, and death. For it is the inconvenience attending persecution, that it is necessarily progressive. Small punishments only irritate. It commences with an intention of suppressing error; baffled in its first attempt, and stung with disappointment, it soon loses sight of its original design; it soon degenerates into a settled resolution to subdue contumacy, and strike terror. It becomes a fearful struggle betwixt power and fortitude; the power of inflicting suffering, and that of enduring, which shall wear the other out. Let those, then, who are advocates for coercive measures, not content

* It is curious that Mr. Hall and his distinguished friend Sir James Macintosh, should, unknown to each other, at different times and by a different course, arrive at a coincident result not likely to occur to ordinary minds. Sir James, in his valuable "Preliminary Dissertation," ENCY. BRITAN. p. 319, says, "A Hobbist is the only consistent persecutor."—ED.

themselves with contemplating those mild expedients which may first present themselves to their minds, but prepare for the consequences, and lay their account with being impelled to the exercise of the last severities. Let them expect to see dungeons crammed with prisoners, and scaffolds streaming with blood. Will any thing but the most unremitting vigilance, the most unrelenting system of espionage, prevent every class of dissenters and methodists from fleeing from such a country, and seeking an asylum in a foreign land?

It is not easy to conceive the wound which this will inflict on the population and prosperity of the empire. That the dissenters are, as a body, an industrious and sober people, their enemies will not deny; and that the commercial prosperity of a country is closely involved in the preservation of such a class of people is equally undeniable. The loss sustained by France in the exile of a million of protestants, by the repeal of the edict of Nantes, has never yet been repaired. Nor was there ever a period when the hazarding such a loss would be more impolitic than the present; when the flourishing state of trade and commerce is essential to the stability of the government, and in a manner to the national existence. For the diminution of revenue, and the disorganization which a considerable failure in the produce of the taxes would occasion, we shall meet with a miserable compensation in a forced and hypocritical uniformity in worship.

"Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis
Tempus eget"———

Virgil.

Will they, whose pride and violence have produced this, be able to remedy the mischief? Will lofty pretensions to unity, will tragic declamations on the sin of schism, and abandoning dissenters to the uncovenanted mercies of God?

The consequences of such an event deserve also to be considered in another point of view. It surely requires but little candour to acknowledge that the deprivations and discredit to which dissenters are exposed, make it probable that, however in the judgment of their opponents they are erroneous, they are at least conscientious. Whatever may be imagined of the caprice, the levity, or obstinacy of individuals, nothing but a sense of duty, it may be fairly presumed, could prevail on numerous bodies of men to place themselves in that situation. In every country, it is no impeachment of the national establishment to suppose that many of those who continue out of its pale, and decline its emoluments, are men of serious piety. If we may form any conjecture of the dissenters of the present day from those of former times, it is obvious that my last remark will apply to them with peculiar force. As the loss of virtue is the greatest loss a nation can sustain, so the expulsion of those who have been distinguished by possessing a superior degree of

piety is an ill omen, an alarming advance towards a general corruption of morals. Men of true piety, in whatever communities they are found, "are the salt of the earth." Their example corroborates the sentiments of virtue, and preserves from degradation the standard of morals. Vice, naturally mean and cowardly, is abashed and confounded before the majesty of virtue. The efficacy of good examples in the formation of public opinion is incalculable. Though men justify their conduct by reasons, and sometimes bring the very rules of virtue to the touchstone of abstraction, yet they principally act from example. Metaphysical reasons have, in reality, had as little to do in the formation of the principles of morals, as rules of grammar in the original structure of language, or those of criticism in the formation of orators and poets.

But if the influence of example is so extensive, and if it be admitted that the dissenters, as a body, are exemplary for industry, sobriety, and a serious sense of religion, the sacrifice of so large a portion of national virtue must be confessed to be an evil of the first magnitude; to say nothing of the justice of the divine administration, which is wont to make the departure of the pious from among a people the signal for pouring out its vials upon guilty cities and nations. Though such an event is alarming at all times, yet the peculiar complexion of the present renders it more so than

ever. To every impartial observer it must be obvious that the present times are distinguished by an unexampled relaxation of manners; or such levity and indifference to every thing serious, as threatens an open revolt from christianity. That rapacity and luxury, a love of pleasure, together with an open disdain for the duties of religion, have rapidly advanced within the last twenty years, can as little be denied.

And is this a season in which we can safely sacrifice a large portion of public virtue and piety? I am aware that the dissenters are considered as a precise and narrow-minded people, whose minds have not expanded with the growing improvements of the age, and that not a little ridicule has attached to them on that account: but may not this unyielding austerity, and these recluse manners, be a useful corrective to the dissipation of the age? While the polished manners of one class of society contribute to its embellishment, may not the severer virtues of another be equally beneficial in affording it stability and strength? Refinement may point the spire, but they are the plain principles of virtue which alone form the basis of the social fabric.

It will not be thought a digression from the present subject to remark the consequences which followed in France from the repeal of the edict of Nantes; to which the measures in question bear a strong resemblance. By that event France deprived herself of a million of her most industrious

subjects, who carried their industry, their arts, and their riches into other countries. The loss which her trade and manufactures sustained by this event was, no doubt, prodigious. But it is not in that view my subject leads me to consider the ill consequences of that step. She lost a people whose simple, frugal manners, and whose conscientious piety, were well adapted to stem the growing corruption of the times, while the zeal and piety of their pastors were a continual stimulus to awaken the exertions of the national clergy.

If France had never had her Saurins, her Claudes, her De Plessis Mornays, her national church had never boasted the genius of Bossuet and the virtues of Fenelon. From the fatal moment she put a period to the toleration of the protestants, the corruptions of the clergy, the abuses of the church, the impiety of the people, met with no check, till infidelity of the worst sort pervaded and ruined the nation. When the remote as well as immediate effects of that edict which suppressed the protestants are taken into the account; when we consider the careless security and growing corruption which hung over the gallican church in consequence of it, it will not be thought too much to affirm that, to that measure may be traced the destruction of the monarchy and the ruin of the nation.

He who considers what it is that constitutes the force of penal laws, will find it is their agreement with the moral feelings which nature has planted

in the breast. When the actions they punish are such, and only such, as the tribunal of conscience has already condemned, they are the constant object of respect and reverence. They enforce and corroborate the principles of moral order, by publishing its decisions and executing its sanctions. They present to the view of mankind an august image of a moral administration,—a representation in miniature of the eternal justice which presides in the dispensations of the Almighty. We behold nothing of the passions of men; we forget their agency, and seem to see nothing but justice and order appearing for a moment on the earth, to restore the tranquillity, and correct the disorders, of society. The sentiments of morality and the sanctions of law maintain, in such a situation, a reciprocal influence over each other. The former derive additional authority from public opinion, and the latter appear sacred and venerable in consequence of their coincidence with the dictates of conscience. When criminal law thus concurs with the maxims of private morality, by corroborating the dictates of conscience, and inspiring the love of justice, tranquillity, and order, and the advancement of the public good, every innocent person becomes interested in maintaining their authority and promoting their execution. Every sentiment of the mind, the sense of security, the love of the public, the sentiment of justice, the abhorrence of crime, are leagued on the side of the laws, and are so many securities for their due execution. It

has been found by experience, as the result of these principles, that laws become feeble and relaxed, not only when they punish innocent objects, but when the punishments they assign are disproportionate to the offence. The want of harmony betwixt the decision of the public and the private tribunal interposes an invariable obstruction to their observance; for crimes must be detected and punishments inflicted by men who will not lend their aid to enforce what they secretly condemn. Hence laws which are enacted with precipitance and passion, or under the influence of party motives, when they come to be executed will have to encounter a perpetual friction, arising from their repugnance to the manners and sentiments of the public. By these means public opinion, which is nothing but the aggregate of the sentiments of individuals, often limits, happily for mankind, the assumed omnipotence of legislation. They are framed in one element, they are executed in another; they must live in a different atmosphere from that in which they are born.

But admitting that the efforts of zeal and the vigilance of government supply this defect, and secure the punishment of those who transgress these laws, it deserves to be considered in what manner their punishment will impress the public. With what feelings will they contemplate the ruin or imprisonment of virtuous men for the exercise of what they esteem the rights of conscience? Will the condign punishment of their countrymen,

not for disturbing the public peace, or for the violation of property, but for a well-meant endeavour to diffuse the principles of piety and the blessings of religion, augment their reverence for the laws; or rather will it not produce, in some an indignation against such flagrant injustice, in others confuse the distinction of right and wrong? When they see atrocious crimes and eminent virtues pursued and punished with the same severity, it must tend to destroy all respect for legislation. They will be no longer solicitous to manifest their innocence, but to secure their impunity; and to the honour of obeying will succeed that of evading the laws. Nor is this all. In the detection of these artificial crimes, the assistance of the profligate and abandoned alone can be expected; which will complete the triumph of wickedness over piety and innocence. To the alliance betwixt church and state we are already familiarized; but an alliance, under pretence of securing the church, betwixt the ministers of religion and a detestable spawn of spies and informers, will appear surprising; nor is it difficult to foresee what ideas it will impress of that religion which stands in need of such aid, or of those ministers who stoop to employ it. Until, by some strange revolution, all the traces of genuine christianity, and all the history of its propagation, are effaced from the mind, it will be impossible for men to mistake this for the religion of Jesus; a religion which grew up in the midst of sufferings, and whose only

weapon is love. In such proceedings they will look for the marks and signs of the true church, and instead of the successors of the apostles, they will imagine they behold a Jewish sanhedrim solemnly commanding the illiterate disciples of Jesus to "teach no more in that name."

It is more than probable that a similar reply will be made, to that of the apostles on a similar occasion, "Whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." Under a full conviction that they are in the path of duty, and promoting the eternal happiness of mankind, it is not easy to see how they can desist. Whatever political superiors may imagine, he who conceives himself implicated in the command to "preach the gospel to every creature," will find it morally impossible to yield active obedience to any contrary command. "We cannot," saith the apostle, "but speak the things which we have heard and seen."

To nominal christians, who may rather be said to comply with the religion of their country than to believe it, on such a subject it is in vain to appeal; but they who are impressed with the importance of eternal things, and know "the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation," will feel no hesitation how to determine in this case.

In perfect consistency with a cheerful submission to the civil authority of their superiors, they will consider it a duty resulting from their allegiance to Jesus Christ to persist in their endeavours to convert mankind.

That coercive measures will tend to ferment a spirit of division in the kingdom, can admit of little doubt. Many, it may be reasonably expected, will feel a generous concern for the oppressed, though they may ridicule the cause in which they suffer; while men of enlarged minds, and who are thoroughly imbued with the love of liberty, will perceive in any one act of oppression, however insulated, a precedent most dangerous to freedom. The mischief in itself may appear little, and the merit of the sufferers inconsiderable in their eyes; but they will consider it as an experiment on the public mind, calculated to prepare them for other acts of oppression; they will consider every thing as alarming that impairs the integrity of freedom, from a conviction that a vessel may be sunk by the smallest leak.

Thus two formidable parties will probably be produced in the kingdom, inflamed with mutual animosity and suspicion. Of the parliament which assembled in the year 1640, on the eve of those commotions which afterwards broke out into a civil war, and issued in such fatal extremities, the puritans formed but a small part. The majority of the number consisted of persons attached to the established church, but who felt indignant at the oppression* of the puritans and the cruelties of Laud. Their attachment to liberty taught them to identify themselves with the sufferers, and to discover in the severities of the star-chamber and

* Clarendon, vol. i. 184.

the high commission court, an exertion of an arbitrary power utterly incompatible with the security of a free people.

Although many causes, it must be confessed, contributed to the ruin of the unfortunate Charles, no single one had so much influence as that religious intolerance which was so unhappy a feature in his character; as, on the other hand, nothing contributed so much to support the precarious authority of Cromwell, and to produce an artificial calm in the midst of so many raging factions, so many stormy elements, as a general liberty of conscience. This, as is remarked by the celebrated Bishop of Meaux, was the great secret of his policy.

The policy of Charles, instead of making him regarded as the common father of his subjects and the guardian of their welfare, providing for the happiness of every part with parental care and impartial solicitude, made him to become the head of a party, while he lent himself as the instrument of gratifying its mean and sanguinary passions; by which means he became the idol of a faction, but lost the hearts of his people. The policy of Cromwell mitigated resentment, conciliated prejudice, and made those acquiesce in his pretensions and concur to maintain his authority, who agreed in nothing else. How precious must that liberty of conscience be, and how fearful the resentment of its loss, which could prompt a great people to suffer their native prince to wander in exile, and

subsist on the alms of rival courts; and reconcile them to the yoke of a master whose power was not supported by the smallest shadow of justice! If such effects followed from invading liberty of conscience at a time when its right had never been ascertained, what may we not apprehend from its violation after an uninterrupted possession of it for a hundred years? when it has become familiar to our laws, habits, and manners, and the apprehension of its danger has been succeeded by an experience of its advantages. What will be, the ultimate issue, should Providence in its infinite wisdom suffer our adversaries to prevail, and the cruelties of persecution to be renewed, it belongs not to me to conjecture: but it may be granted me to express my humble hope that we shall stand firm in the day of trial; not forgetting, that persecution and sufferings have been the lot of the most eminent of God's servants; that in walking in this path we are encompassed with "a cloud of witnesses;" with apostles, prophets, and evangelists, whose words will teach, whose examples will encourage, us to adorn that cause by our sufferings which we are no longer permitted to aid by our exertions.

Having executed to the best of my ability the plan I proposed, my freedom, I trust, will be pardoned if I suggest a few hints of advice to those who are employed in disseminating the knowledge of christianity in villages.

1. To abstain from political reflection, and from censuring either the constitution of the church or the clergy, is a part of prudence on which I ever would hope it is needless to insist.

2. Though I am convinced that those who attempt to evangelize the poor do not fail to inculcate the morality of the gospel, it may yet be doubted whether this is done with sufficient distinctness and detail. A notion prevails among some, that to preach the gospel includes nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced they are ready to suppose the work is done, and that all the virtues of the christian character will follow by necessary consequence. Hence they satisfy themselves with recommending holiness in general terms, without entering into its particular duties; and this in such a manner as rather to predict it as the result of certain opinions, than to enforce it on the ground of moral obligation; which tends to disjoin faith and virtue by turning all the solicitude of men to the former, while the latter is left to provide for itself, and to make them substitute the agitation of the passions, and the adoption of a speculative creed, in the room of that renovation of heart and life which the Scriptures render necessary.

Some apology, it is true, ought to be made for those who have leaned to this extreme from the circumstances in which they have been placed. Having been called to preach to people who were

ignorant of the very first truths of religion, they have supposed it necessary to employ themselves in laying the foundation. On the supposition we were to address an audience that was not acquainted with the primary doctrines, it would be necessary to begin with relating the facts and teaching the doctrines which are the basis of the christian dispensation. The *credenda*, or things to be believed, must necessarily precede the *facienda*, or things to be done. But though things must proceed in this order, no durable separation should be made of the doctrines from the duties of christianity; lest the people should acquire a corrupt taste, and, satisfied with their first attainments and impressions, neglect to cultivate that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." When they have been long detained in the elementary doctrines, they are not unfrequently found to acquire a distaste for the practical parts of scripture; an impatience of reproof; a dislike, in short, of every thing but what flatters them with a favourable opinion of their character and their state. Proud, bigoted, disputatious, careless of virtue, tenacious of subtleties, their religion evaporates in opinion, and their supposed conversion is nothing more than an exchange of the vices of the brute for those of the speculator in theological difficulties.

The best method of preventing this fatal abuse of evangelical doctrine is to inculcate, in immediate connexion with it, those virtues of the christian character by which faith must be tried, frequently,

distinctly, and fully. Instead of recommending practical religion only in general terms, under the phrase of holiness or any other, let us, in imitation of inspired preachers, explain in what that holiness consists. When John came preaching "repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand," he did not satisfy himself with barren and general abstractions: in reply to the inquiries of those who asked him what they must do, he entered into details, he imparted specific advice, and enjoined specific duties corresponding to the different conditions of men, and their relation to each other in society. Had he contented himself with merely reiterating the command to repent in general terms, as, it is to be feared, is too often the case, his hearers might have mistaken a transient compunction, a vague sensation of uneasiness, for the duty demanded: but by that particularity of application he adopted, the conscience was informed, and the necessity perceived of "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance."

The conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character: they may alarm at first; but, after a while, if they be often asserted merely as general truths, which involve the whole human race, they will supply no materials for self-examination or painful retrospect. They will, in process of time, be regarded as doctrinal points, and pass from the conscience into the creed. He must know little

of human nature who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception are detected, and the vain excuses by which the sinner palliates his guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive tranquillity: in a word, it is when the heart is forced to see in itself the original of what is described by the apostle, and, perceiving that "the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down and confesses that God is amongst us of a truth." The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending that which he had committed. The sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, which produced such decisive effects, was not a general declamation on the evil of sin, but it contained a specific charge against his hearers of having rejected and crucified their Messiah. When Paul was called before Felix, being well acquainted with his character, he adapted his discourse accordingly, and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come," until "Felix trembled." The delineations of character and the injunctions of scripture on practical

points are not couched in general terms; they are diversified and particular; nor can it justly be doubted that the more of individuality, if I may be allowed the expression, our pictures of human nature possess, the more impressive will they become. It is in this department of public instruction there is scope for endless variety; for the highest exertions of intellect, and the richest stores of knowledge.

The doctrines of christianity, though of infinite importance, are yet few and simple, capable of few combinations, and of little variety of illustration; too precise to leave any thing for the understanding to invent; too awful to permit the imagination to embellish. It is not in the statement of christian doctrines, considered in themselves, that experience, talents, and knowledge find scope for their exertion.

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On the Right of Worship.*

Worship consists in the performance of all those external acts, and the observance of all those rites and ceremonies, in which men engage with the professed and sole view of honouring God. It is consequently in a pre-eminent manner the concern

* This appears to have been written in 1811; the preceding fifty-one pages in 1801, and 1802.

of conscience; for, as God is the supreme master and legislator, it is impossible for a conscientious man, in compliance with human injunctions, either to omit any part of that worship which he apprehends God to require, or to perform any which he has forbidden. In worship, the creature has to do only with his Creator. There are, unquestionably, some regards due to God, some expressions of our reverence to him and our dependence upon him, which it is our duty to render; and the duties which have God immediately for their object, must be in their obligation paramount to every other; that is, such that the commands of no human superior can discharge us from it. It remains only to be considered by what criterion these duties are to be ascertained.

Among the different modes of worship which prevail in different countries, and in the same country, to what standard are we to appeal? by what principle is the solution to be made? Either the mere will of the magistrate, or the conscience of the individual, must decide in this case. I say, the *mere* will, because if the promulgation of his will be enforced by arguments and reasons, these arguments are necessarily submitted to the judgement of the subject; and consequently, as far as they are concerned, he is still left to his conscience. But if such a power as this be vested in the magistrate, it is highly necessary to examine the consequences to which it will lead. It will legitimate all the persecutions which the

heathen emperors inflicted on the primitive christians as well as the more recent popish cruelties. For from what principle did those persecutions flow, but that the magistrate possessed a right to determine and prescribe the religion of his subjects, and that a refusal to comply with his authority involved political guilt? The just pretensions of magistracy in this respect are surely equal; nor can any reason be assigned for denying that authority to heathen or popish princes, within their dominions, which will not equally apply to protestant princes.

The dominion of God over his creatures is original, inalienable, and supreme; so that men must be contemplated as the subjects of God, before we consider them as members of a civil community. The formation of states, and the enaction of laws, are operations which regard man in his transient and local situation as the inhabitant of the present world. There is, on the principles of Theism, above and beyond these, an original and fundamental moral law which unites him to his Maker, and obliges him to fear, serve, and obey him as his superior Lord. That this law is more original and comprehensive than any other, is evident from this consideration, that it comprehends sovereign as well as subjects; that it regards men in those invariable, essential qualities in which they all agree; and that it can never be suspended by time or change.

As men are the creatures of God originally and

essentially, and continually accountable to him, whatever laws are established for the government of particular societies, are in the nature of *by-laws*, with relation to the duties which intelligent creatures owe to God; and whenever civil magistrates interfere with these, they are guilty of the same absurdity as a particular corporation would be who formed municipal regulations inconsistent with the law of the land. No particular society has a right to make rules for its regulation which interfere with the general laws of that kingdom of which it is a part; for this would be to introduce an *imperium in imperio*, a multitude of legislatures, and a confusion and uncertainty in the principles of justice.

In like manner no human power can justly make laws which shall interfere with those duties which are previously due to God. As a necessary consequence of this, it follows, that whatever right men possess to worship God after the dictates of conscience, in a state of nature, is not diminished or impaired by entering into society. If seditious purposes be concealed under the pretext of assembling for religious worship, let the severest laws be enacted for their punishment. Let the claims of liberty of conscience be permitted as a cover for nothing which does not belong to it.

There is less reason, however, for entertaining any alarm on this head in tolerating worshipping assemblies than any other; for they are always public. They invite inspection. Who would be

so infatuated as to attempt to connect treasonable or seditious designs with assemblies which are open to every one, and whose time and place of meeting are universally known? Besides, the very business of worship is at the greatest distance possible from every thing tending to inflame political passions. Directed to a spiritual and invisible Being, it withdraws the mind from the world, and turns the thoughts into a channel the most remote from those affections which disturb the repose of society.

It would be strange indeed if those exercises which have the most direct influence in tranquillizing the heart, and reducing all earthly things to comparative insignificance, must be forbidden, from an apprehension of their becoming engines of insurrection and tumult. They cannot be perverted in the smallest degree to this purpose, without their danger being perceived; and it will then be soon enough to apply remedies.

This reasoning does not apply against the magistrate selecting some one particular sect, or some one set of religious opinions, and bringing them under his exclusive patronage and encouragement; in other words, the erection of a religious establishment. Whatever the advantages or inconveniences may be which result from religious establishments is foreign to the subject in hand, which regards only the free and full toleration of different sects, as long as they contain themselves within the limits of civil submission.

It will be alleged that on these principles a multitude of ignorant enthusiasts and wild fanatics will start up, and, under the pretence of preaching the gospel, bring religion into contempt, and thence eventually open a door for profaneness and impiety. That this may in some instances be the consequence of unlimited toleration of christian worship cannot perhaps be denied; as little can it be denied that this is a great evil. It is much to be lamented that any should engage in the functions of a christian minister, who, in addition to an unblemished character, is not possessed of a competent measure of ability. But this inconvenience may be only one instance, among an infinity of others, of a partial evil, connected with a principle productive of the greatest good.

Pure and unmixed good is not the portion of earth. We cannot specify a single law in the natural or moral world, which falls within the sphere of our observation, which is not productive (along with permanent good) of occasional evils. This mixture of partial evil with the source of general happiness, seems to be an essential part of the imperfections of the present state. If the magistrate is invested with the power of suppressing all whom he thinks incompetent to the office of a preacher, there can be no liberty and no tranquillity. But it is surely of more consequence to a state to preserve the most valuable portion of its liberty, than to preserve a perfect exemption from fanaticism. The care of the former falls

within the proper province of a magistrate. The latter is consistent with a high degree of national prosperity. Religious enthusiasm becomes dangerous to a state only when it is the subject of oppression. There is in it an elastic quality which repels rigorous coercion. The vivid impressions of religious objects which it includes, rather tend to sink the value of all earthly interests, to annihilate the world and all its concerns, and to produce a conduct which, though it may be wild and incoherent, yet, if left to itself, will be mild, inoffensive, and benevolent. Besides, enthusiasm consisting in a preternatural state of exaltation, has a strong tendency to subside in a short time, and with the increase of knowledge to purify itself until it settles into calm enlightened piety. It is not, like superstition, a permanent evil. The enthusiast is impatient of control in his religious concerns, but does not aspire after dominion. In proportion as the passions are strongly possessed by invisible objects, the interests of the present state lose their ascendency, and the enraptured enthusiast is more in danger of becoming indolent than factious. The most effectual way of transporting such characters into political excesses, is to inflame them by oppression,—when they naturally learn to consider their enemies as the enemies of God, and throw the whole weight of their religious prejudices and passions into the scale of political opposition; while, on the other hand, a complete toleration is the most effectual remedy

for their intemperance; leaving them leisure to reflect, and affording room for the ordinary motives and principles of life to resume their ascendency.

In the history of those sects which have been the most justly branded with enthusiasm, we shall uniformly find that, while they were exasperated by persecution they were fierce and wild, and their fanaticism continued unsubdued; but no sooner were they left unmolested than those features in their character which excited alarm, gradually wore off, and they ceased to be formidable.

The history of the Baptists who rose, in the sixteenth century, in Germany, and of the Quakers in England, confirms the truth of this remark.

Though the tyrannical measures pursued by Charles the First, at the beginning of his reign, naturally excited alarm and awoke opposition, it seems evident the civil war could never have been kindled but for the intolerable cruelties inflicted by Laud on nonconformists, which cemented the various sects, and made them unite in a vehement opposition to the government of Charles, while their tenets were too discordant to permit them to unite in any thing else. The magnitude of eternal interests, and the mighty force of religious passions, were superadded to the causes already existing of political contention, and by their union kindled those flames of war which consumed the land. Cromwell, on the other hand, whose usurpation was supported by no law, and who had to contend with the whole weight of virtuous prejudice

in favour of the constitution he had overturned, and the family he had expelled, practised an opposite policy, and contrived to retain in subjection three kingdoms, by granting to the rival sects a general toleration, and balancing their power against each other. The importance of this expedient in the preservation of his power has been acknowledged, both in England and the continent, by the most inveterate enemies of that extraordinary man. The eloquent Bishop of Meaux, in his funeral oration for Henrietta of France, ascribes his success principally to this measure of his administration. Since the revolution, at which a universal religious toleration took place, amidst all our calamities and reverses, an unexampled duration of domestic peace has been enjoyed, with two very short interruptions from occasions foreign from the topic under present consideration; and during this protracted period, the mild spirit of legislation has communicated itself to all sects, and in a very eminent degree mitigated the acrimony of religious zeal.

A species of religious fanaticism, it is confessed, made its appearance in the sixteenth century in Germany, and in the next century in England, which was of a highly political complexion, and struck immediately at the root of civil power, the distinctions of rank, and the offices of magistracy; but even the history of the Baptists in Germany, and of the Fifth-monarchy men, supplies reasons for toleration, since we see that the obnoxious tenets

which distinguished them soon disappeared, and that under milder treatment their successors have retained only some peculiarities of the most harmless kind. The extravagant flights of fanaticism, its visionary spirit, which might tempt its possessors to trample upon the rules of society, can never last long or extend far; for the principles of self-preservation, the physical wants of the lower orders especially, who are most obnoxious to such impressions, the spirit of imitation, the habit of submission to superiors, together with the ordinary occupations of life, are principles of perpetual operation, the influence of which will soon surmount the strongest feelings, which operate only occasionally and by starts, and will consequently force the mind back into its proper element. For the same reasons it can never extend far. Minds only of a peculiar texture will feel its impression. A vast majority of every community will be too wise, too busy, too sensual, or too phlegmatic, to be transported into dangerous excesses by causes which operate on the imagination, and which have no relation to the more ordinary sources of pain and pleasure. No fanaticism of this kind has made its appearance at present, nor is there any room to presume it will. Some degree of enthusiasm, perhaps, generally accompanies religious impressions in uncultivated minds, at their commencement. Enthusiasm may be defined that religious state of mind in which the imagination is unduly heated, and the passions outrun the

understanding. But when persons are first deeply impressed with the infinitely momentous concerns of a future life, and are thereby introduced as it were into a new world, it is too much to expect their religious affections shall be perfectly regulated, or their conduct, under circumstances so novel, be consistent with the exactest rules of propriety. New situations, whether resulting from a moral and internal change, or from outward circumstances, make it necessary for some time to pass, before those who are led into them know perfectly how to adjust their behaviour to them. But if the profession of piety be sincere (and of hypocrisy we are not at present speaking) it will eventually secure, together with the essential moral virtues, a regard to decorum and to all the minuter proprieties of social intercourse. In the mean time, where the love of God and man predominates, it will ill become the governor of a christian country, and still less the governor of a christian church, to suffer himself to be so much offended at the intemperate effusions of honest zeal, as to disregard the substance of religion because it may be deficient in some of its more amiable appendages.

If we adopt the maxims of a profane and careless world, we shall be taught to look upon all zealous christians as enthusiasts or hypocrites; for when have they not, by a majority of mankind, been represented in that light? To men of the world it appears so strange that men should be

affected by the consideration of invisible realities in any degree proportioned to the influence of present objects; it is so utterly remote from all their practical estimates; that they have no means of accounting for it without imputing it to a partial insanity or deliberate hypocrisy. But this is only one among numberless glaring inconsistencies of human conduct. For these very persons, it is probable, have never formally renounced the authority of Jesus Christ, who commands us to "seek *first* the kingdom of God," nor the certainty of an eternal state, in comparison of which the interests and prospects of the present are annihilated; and yet they are surprised to find that good and evil should be estimated with regard to their respective magnitude, and that any should be weak enough to credit the declarations and obey the precepts of our common Lord. Such is the fascination of the world, and so complete its triumph in effecting a total divorce of the speculations from the practical belief of professed christians. If the truths which religion reveals, and the hopes it inspires, respect an infinite good, and the present life be, as we know by experience, short and transitory, it must be the truest wisdom to be deeply solicitous to attain that good, and to be disposed to make any sacrifice of present pleasure and convenience with a view to it; and when this is the habitual state of the mind, it will imprint some traces of itself in the external deportment, which the irreligious part of mankind

will be sure to brand with the name of hypocrisy or fanaticism.

The primitive christians encountered this reproach, and their successors must expect it in proportion as they tread in their steps. That world to which we are hastening will determine who are justly chargeable with folly; they who treat eternal things according to their true nature, who, making the service of God their supreme concern, pass the time of their sojourning here in fear; or they, the language of whose conduct is, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

To suppose that that religious state of mind in which devout affections are highly [raised]* is enthusiastic, is a most pernicious mistake, and would in its consequences utterly extirpate religion, and expunge a great part of the Scriptures. The smallest acquaintance with the New Testament must convince every one that the apostles and primitive christians were no strangers to the strongest religious emotions.

We read of a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," of a "peace that passeth all understanding," with innumerable other expressions of a similar kind, which indicate strong and vehement emotions of mind. That the great objects of christianity, called eternity, heaven and hell, are of sufficient magnitude to justify vivid emotions of joy, fear, and love, is indisputable, if it be allowed we have

* Whenever a word is placed thus between brackets, it is supplied conjecturally, the manuscript being illegible.—Ed.

any relation to them; nor is it less certain that religion could never have any powerful influence, if it did not influence through the medium of the affections. All objects which have any permanent influence, influence the conduct in this way. We may possibly be first set in motion by their supposed connexion with our interest; but unless they draw to themselves particular affections, the pursuit soon terminates.

The cool calculation of interest operates only at times; we are habitually borne forward in all parts of our career by specific affections and passions; some more simple and original, others complicated and acquired. In men of a vulgar cast, the grosser appetites, in minds more elevated, the passions of sympathy, taste, ambition, the pleasures of imagination, are the springs of motion. The world triumphs over its votaries by approaching them on the side of their passions; and it does not so much deceive their reason as captivate their heart.

It is in this way the love of the world must be repelled. As it is not chiefly by imposing on the understanding, or misleading the rational assent, that the world triumphs over its votaries, so the mere inculcation of religious truth on the intellect, without forming deep and lasting impressions on the heart, will never be sufficient to emancipate us from its control. The difficulties which accrue in a religious career, especially at its outset, are so many and formidable, that unless we are deeply

interested as well as convinced, perseverance is impracticable. In that victory over the world which is promised to faith, it is necessary to oppose feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure. The intemperate attachment to sensual pleasure must be subdued by the fear of punishment; the vain and extravagant hopes which present scenes inspire must be effaced by hopes more solid and more animating; and to wean us from the breasts of earthly, we must be led to the breasts of spiritual, consolation.

The world amuses, enchants, transports us; how shall religion teach us to triumph over it, if it present nothing but speculative conclusions, and if the views of a rational self-interest which it displays, were not intimately associated with objects adapted to engage and fill the heart? Would the primitive christians have taken *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, because they had in heaven a more enduring substance? Would they not only have felt calm and resolute, but accounted "it all joy when they suffered divers persecutions," if the objects of eternity had not occupied a large share of their affections?

The familiar acknowledgment, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;* the frequency with which men act contrary to the most mature convictions of reason and conscience, shews how inefficacious is a mere speculative conviction, when opposed to inveterate habits and passions. What is the defect here experienced, but a want of the

correspondent feelings and impressions from which that state of desire results which impels to virtuous action?

As the objects of religion are infinite and eternal, if the mind is duly affected by them at all, they have a tendency to enlarge and propagate their correspondent affections more and more; and will probably tend ultimately to absorb and extinguish all other hopes and fears.

Though good men are continually approaching nearer and nearer to this state, it is neither possible nor desirable they should reach it in this life. The multitude of pains, difficulties, and perplexities, with which they have to encounter, are continually drawing their attention to present objects; and the duties of the present state could not be performed in that exalted state of spirituality. An eminent degree and vigour of the religious affections, then, ought not to be denominated fanaticism, unless they arise from wrong views of religion, or are so much indulged as to disqualify for the duties of society. Within these limits, the more elevated devotional sentiments are, the more perfect is the character, and the more suited to the destination of a being, who has, indeed, an important part to act here, but who stands on the confines of eternity. He may justly be styled a fanatic, who, under a pretence of spirituality, neglects the proper business of life, or who, from mistaken views of religion, elevates himself to an imaginary superiority to the rules

of virtue and morality. Whatever other kind of fanaticism, real or pretended, [exists,] seems not to fall, in the smallest degree, under the conduct of the civil magistrate; nor is there any danger of immorality being inculcated under any corruption of the christian doctrine. Many religious systems, considered in their theory, may seem to tend to the encouragement of vice; they may, in their speculative consequences, set aside the obligations of virtue; but the uncorrupted dictates of conscience, the general sentiments of mankind respecting right and wrong, and the close alliance betwixt devotion and virtue, will always counteract this tendency, so far, that the same persons will be more moral with very erroneous religious opinions, than without religion. A practical disregard to piety is the prolific source of vice. We shall find the minds of every sect of christians, who are zealous in religion, superior to those who are careless and profane. Whatever tends to draw the attention to God and eternity, tends to destroy the dominion of sin. Under the varied forms of religious belief which have prevailed among the different parties of christians, little variation has taken place in the rule of life. In the first age of christianity, the church was accused, by the malice of its enemies, of the most shameful and unnatural practices; which it disclaimed, but, at the same time, very injudiciously insinuated that the Gnostics were guilty of the crimes which were alleged: but the result of the more calm and

dispassionate investigation of later times, has been a growing conviction that these surmises had no foundation in fact. The doctrines of our holy religion may be wofully curtailed and corrupted, and its profession sink into formality; but its moral precepts are so plain and striking, and guarded by such clear and awful sanctions, as to render it impossible it can ever be converted into an active instrument of vice. Let the appeal be made to facts. Look through all the different sects and parties into which professed christians are unhappily divided. Where is there one to be found who has innovated in the rule of life, by substituting vice in place of virtue? The fears entertained from this quarter must be considered as chimerical and unfounded until they are confirmed by the evidence of facts. In those districts in which the dissenters and methodists have been most zealous and successful in village preaching, are the morals of the people more corrupted than in other places? Are they distinguished by a greater degree of profligacy, intemperance, and debauchery, than the inhabitants of other parts of the country? The advocates of rigorous measures will scarcely have the temerity to put the question upon this issue; and until they do, all their pretended dread of the growth of licentiousness from village preaching, will be considered as nothing but artifice.

To contend for the legal monopoly of religious instruction, under pretence of securing the morals

of the people, is a similar kind of policy with that of the papists, who withhold the Scriptures from the common people, lest they should be betrayed into heresy. We all perceive the design of the papist in this restriction is to prevent the diffusion of knowledge, which would be fatal to ghostly dominion. Is it not equally evident that the prohibition to instruct the populace in the principles of christianity originates in this jealousy of power?

We must, at least, be permitted to express our surprise at the profound sagacity of those who can discover a design to destroy morality by inculcating religion, and a purpose of making men vicious by making them serious. Plain men must be excused if they are startled by such refined and intricate paradoxes.

It highly becomes those who are the advocates for the interference of government to restrain the efforts of methodists and dissenters to diffuse the principles of knowledge and piety, to advert to the consequences which must result.

Those who are conscientious will feel it their duty, in opposition to the mandates of authority, to proceed patiently, enduring whatever punishment the legislature may think proper to inflict. The government, irritated at their supposed criminal obstinacy, will be tempted to enact severer laws, accompanied with severer penalties, which the truly conscientious will still think it their duty to brave, imitating the example of the primitive teachers of christianity, who departed from the

presence of the council, "rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer for the name of Christ." Thus will commence a struggle betwixt the ruling powers and the most upright part of the subjects, which shall first wear each other out, the one by infliction, or the other by endurance; prisons will be crowded, cruel punishments will become familiar, and blood probably will be spilt. The nation will be afflicted with the frightful spectacle of innocent and exemplary characters suffering the utmost vengeance of the law for crimes which the sufferers glory in having committed.

It is an inherent and inseparable inconvenience in persecution that it knows not where to stop. It only aims at first to crush the obnoxious sect; it meets with a sturdy resistance; it then punishes the supposed crime of obstinacy, till at length the original magnitude of the error is little thought of in the solicitude to maintain the rights of authority. This is illustrated in the letter of Pliny to Trajan,* treating of the persecution of christians. *Their obstinacy* in refusing to comply with the mandates of supreme authority [constituted the crime.] In other penal laws, a proportion is usually observed betwixt the crime and the punishment, the evil and the remedy; but here the pride of dictating and imposing mingles itself, and draws [reasons] for severity even from the insignificance of the error and of the persecuted sect, which should be its protection.

* Lib. x. Epis. 97.—Ed.

As the power of the community is delegated to the magistrate to enable him to punish such delinquencies, and to avenge such injuries, as it would be unsafe to leave to the resentment of the individual to punish, the voice of law should ever be in harmony with the voice of conscience and of reason. It should punish only those actions which are previously condemned in the tribunal of every man's own breast. The majesty of law, considered as an authoritative rule of action, can only be maintained by its agreement with the simple and unsophisticated decisions of the mind respecting right and wrong. On these principles law is entitled to profound veneration as a sort of secondary morality, or an application of the principles of virtue and social order to the real situation and actual circumstances of mankind. As the civil magistrate is invested with a portion of divine authority for the government of men, so wise legislation is a reservoir of moral regulation and principles drawn from the springs and fountains of eternal justice. When government is thus conducted, it leagues all the virtues on its side; whatever is venerable, whatever is good rallies round the standard of authority; and to support the dignity of the laws is to support virtue itself. In persecution it is directly the opposite. When innocent persons [suffer] for a resolute adherence to the dictates of conscience, the sentiments of moral approbation are necessarily disjoined from the operation of the laws.

The fear of civil punishment is a motive which the wisdom of mankind has superadded to the other motives which operate to restrain men from criminal conduct. The contempt and hatred of our fellow-creatures, and the dread of punishment from an invisible Judge, are not always found in fact to be of sufficient force to control the unruly passions of bad men. In addition to this, men have contrived so to organize society, that the disturbers of other men's peace and the invaders of their rights shall have to dread an adequate punishment from the arm of a public person who represents the community. As the fears with which human laws inspire offenders, are superadded motives, they pre-suppose the existence of an original one. They are a superstructure which can only stand on the foundation of those distinctions of right and wrong which the simplest dictates of the understanding recognise. To disjoin the fear of human [laws] from its natural associates, the forfeiture of public esteem, and the dread of divine wrath, is a solecism of the most glaring nature.

Again, the terror of punishment is designed to operate on the community at large, not on a small number of people of a peculiar manner of thinking. But the great body of a people are affected only by what is palpable; they are unable to comprehend subtle and refined reasoning. It is only what is plain and evident that is tangible by their gross conceptions. Admitting, therefore, that the criminality of persisting to follow the dictates of conscience

in matters of religion were capable of demonstration, it would remain a very improper object of punishment, because the evidence of its criminality could never be generally understood. The guilt of the sufferer would always be considered as very equivocal; and the sentiments of the community [divided] between the condemnation of the persecuted party and the government. From this will naturally follow two parties in the state, influenced with the most vehement mutual resentment and antipathy; and all the combustible materials already collected are liable to be kindled by the sparks of religious contention. Have not religious persecutions been almost invariably the harbinger of civil wars, alarming commotions, and awful calamities? Persecution in matters of religion raises up the very hydra it is meant to destroy. The only plausible ground on which it can be defended, is the danger of the state accruing from a diversity of opinion on matters of the first importance, and the necessity, in order to secure public tranquillity, to establish uniformity of opinion. But when persecutions are adopted, the lawfulness of those very measures becomes a subject of contention, as interesting as the dissensions it is designed to terminate.

The question of the claim to liberty of conscience is surely a question of this kind.

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A

SHORT STATEMENT

OF THE

REASONS

FOR

CHRISTIAN IN OPPOSITION TO PARTY COMMUNION.

[PUBLISHED IN 1826.]

PREFACE.

After having discussed so largely, in some former publications, the question of strict communion, that is, the prevailing practice in the Baptist denomination, of confining their fellowship to members of their own community, it was not my intention to trouble the public with the subject any further, not having the least ambition for the last word in controversy. But it has been suggested to me, that it would not be difficult to condense the substance of the argument within a smaller compass, so as to render it accessible to such as have neither the leisure nor the inclination to peruse a large performance. It has been my endeavour to cut off every thing superfluous, and, without doing injury to the merits of the cause, to present the reasoning which sustains it in a concise and popular form: how far I have succeeded, must be left to the judgement of the reader.

I would only remark here, that all I have seen and heard concurs to convince me, that the practice of strict communion rests almost entirely on

authority, and that were the influence of a few great names withdrawn, it would sink under its own weight. Among those of recent date, none has been more regarded than that of the late venerable Fuller; and as he left a manuscript on this subject to be published after his death, he is considered as having deposed his dying testimony in its favour. That he felt some predilection to a practice to which he had been so long accustomed, and whose propriety was very rarely questioned in his early days, is freely admitted; but that he all along felt some hesitation on the subject, and that his mind was not completely made up, I am induced to believe from several circumstances. First, from the fact of his proposing himself to commune at Cambridge, with the full knowledge of there being pædobaptists present. Secondly, from a conversation which passed, many years ago, between him and the writer of these lines. In reply to his observation, that we act precisely on the same principle with our pædobaptist brethren, since they also insist on baptism as an essential pre-requisite to communion, it was remarked, that this was a mere *argumentum ad hominem;* it might serve to silence the clamours of those pædobaptists, who while they adhered to that principle, charged us with bigotry; but that still it did not touch the merits of the question, since a previous inquiry occurs, whether any thing more is requisite to communion, on scriptural grounds, than a vital union with Christ:

his answer was, *When mixed communion is placed on that footing, I never yet ventured to attack it.* Hence I am compelled to consider his posthumous tract rather as a trial of what might be adduced on that side of the controversy, with a view to provoke further inquiry, than the result of deliberate and settled conviction. Be this as it may, great as his merits were, he was but a man, and as such liable to err, even on subjects of much greater importance. All I wish is, that without regard to human names or authorities, the matter in debate may be entirely determined by an unprejudiced appeal to reason and scripture.

The prevalence of this disposition to bow to authority, and to receive opinions upon trust, is strikingly illustrated by the following anecdote. A highly respected friend of mine, on asking one of his deacons, a man of primitive piety and integrity, what objections he had to mixed communion, he replied, with great simplicity, that he had two; in the first place, Mr. Fuller did not approve of it; and in the next, the scripture declares, that "he who pulls down a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." The good man very properly placed that reason first, which carried the greatest weight with it.

In short, there is a certain false refinement and subtlety in the argument for strict communion, which would never occur to a plain man, who was left solely to the guidance of scripture. In common with almost every other error, it derived

its origin from the public teachers of religion, and with a change of sentiment in them, it will gradually disappear; nor will it be long ere our churches will be surprised that they suffered themselves to be betrayed, by specious, but hollow sophistry, into a practice so repulsive and so impolitic.

Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.

October 7, 1826.

A SHORT STATEMENT.

It is admitted, by all denominations of christians, with the exception of one, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is of perpetual obligation, and that it was designed by its Founder for one of the principal indications and expressions of that fraternal affection which ought to distinguish his followers. Though the communion of saints is of larger extent, comprehending all those sentiments and actions by which christians are especially united, the joint participation of this rite is universally acknowledged to constitute an important branch of that communion. So important a part has it been considered, that it has usurped the name of the whole; and when any dispute arises respecting the terms of communion, it is generally understood to relate to the terms of admission to the Lord's table.

Whether all real christians are entitled to share in this privilege, whether it forms a part of that spiritual provision which belongs to the whole family of the faithful, or whether it is the exclusive patrimony of a sect, who (on the ground of

their supposed imperfection) are authorized to repel the rest, is the question which it is my purpose, in the following pages, briefly and calmly to discuss.

The first conclusion to which we should naturally arrive, would probably favour the more liberal system; we should be ready to suppose that he who is accepted of Christ ought also to be accepted of his brethren, and that he whose right to the thing signified was not questioned, possessed an undoubted right to the outward sign. There are some truths which are so self-evident, that a formal attempt to prove them has the appearance of trifling, where the premises and the conclusion so nearly coincide, that it is not easy to point out the intermediate links that at once separate and connect them. Whether the assertion, that all sincere christians are entitled to a place at the Lord's table is of that description, will more clearly appear as we advance; but I must be permitted to say, that a feeling of the kind just mentioned, has occasioned the greatest difficulty I have experienced in this discussion.

It is well known that a diversity of sentiment has long subsisted in this country, in relation to the proper subjects of baptism, together with the mode of administering that rite. While the great body of the christian world administer baptism to infants, and adopt the practice of sprinkling or pouring the sacramental water, there are some who contend that baptism should be confined to

those who are capable of understanding the articles of the christian religion, or, in other words, to adults, and that the proper mode is the immersion of the whole body. They who maintain the last of these opinions, were formally designated by the appellation of *anabaptists;* but as that term implied that they assumed a right of *repeating* baptism, when in reality their only reason for baptizing such as had been sprinkled in their infancy, was, that they looked upon the baptism of infants as a mere human invention, the candour of modern times has changed the invidious appellation of anabaptist, to the more simple one of baptist.

It is not my intention to attempt the defence of that class of christians, though their views are entirely in accordance with my own; one consequence, however, necessarily results. We are compelled, by virtue of them, to look upon the great mass of our fellow-christians as *unbaptized.* On no other ground can we maintain our principles, or justify our conduct. Hence it has been inferred, too hastily in my opinion, that we are bound to abstain from their communion, whatever judgement we may form of their sincerity and piety. Baptism, it is alleged, is, under all possible circumstances, an indispensable term of communion; and however highly we may esteem many of our pædobaptist brethren, yet, as we cannot but deem them *unbaptized,* we must of necessity consider them as disqualified for an approach to the Lord's table. It is evident that this reasoning rests

entirely on the assumption that baptism is invariably a necessary condition of communion—an opinion which it is not surprising the baptists should have embraced, since it has long passed current in the christian world, and been received by nearly all denominations of christians. The truth is, it has never, till of late, become a practical question, nor could it while all parties acknowledged each other's baptism. It was only when a religious denomination arose, whose principles compelled them to deny the validity of any other baptism besides that which they themselves practised, that the question respecting the relation which that ordinance bears to the Lord's supper, could have any influence on practice. But a doctrine which can have no possible influence on practice, is received with little or no examination; and to this must be imputed the facility with which it has been so generally admitted that baptism must necessarily and invariably precede an admission to the Lord's table. The wide circulation, however, of this doctrine, ought undoubtedly to have the effect of softening the severity of censure on that conduct (however singular it may appear) which is its necessary result: such is that of the great majority of the baptists, in confining their communion to those whom they deem baptized; wherein they act precisely on the same principle with all other christians, who assume it for granted that baptism is an essential preliminary to the reception of the sacrament. The

point on which they differ is the nature of that institution, which we place in immersion, and of which we suppose rational and accountable agents the only fit subjects; this opinion, combined with the other generally received one, that none are entitled to receive the eucharist but such as have been baptized, leads inevitably to the practice which seems so singular, and gives so much offence—the restricting of communion to our own denomination. Let it be admitted that baptism is, under all circumstances, a necessary condition of church fellowship, and it is impossible for the baptists to act otherwise. That their practice in this particular is harsh and illiberal, is freely admitted, but it is the infallible consequence of the opinion generally entertained respecting communion, conjoined with their peculiar views of the baptismal rite. The recollection of this may suffice to rebut the ridicule, and silence the clamour, of those who loudly condemn the baptists for a proceeding, which, were they but to change their opinion on the subject of baptism, their own principles would compel them to adopt. They both concur in a common principle, from which the practice deemed so offensive is the necessary result.

Considered as an *argumentum ad hominem,* or an appeal to the avowed principles of our opponents, this reasoning may be sufficient to shield us from that severity of reproach to which we are often exposed, nor ought we to be censured for acting upon a system which is sanctioned by our

accusers. Still it leaves the real merits of the question untouched; for the inquiry remains open, whether baptism *is* an indispensable pre-requisite to communion; in other words, whether they stand in such a relation to each other, that the involuntary neglect of the first, incurs a forfeiture of the title to the last.

The chief, I might say the only, argument for the restricted plan of communion, is derived from the example of the apostles, and the practice of the primitive church. It is alleged, with some appearance of plausibility, that the first duty enjoined on the primitive converts to christianity was to be baptized, that no repeal of the law has taken place since, that the apostles uniformly baptized their converts before they admitted them to the sacrament, and that, during the first and purest ages, the church knew of no members who had not submitted to that rite; and that, consequently, in declining a union with those, whom, however estimable in other respects, we are obliged to consider as *unbaptized,* we are following the highest precedents, and treading in the hallowed steps of the inspired teachers of religion. Such, in a few words, is the sum and substance of their reasoning who are the advocates of strict communion; and as it approaches with a lofty and imposing air, and has prevailed with thousands, to embrace what appears to me a most serious error, I must bespeak the reader's patience, while I endeavour to sift it to the bottom, in order to expose its fallacy.

Precedent derived from the practice of inspired men is entitled to be regarded as *law*, in exact proportion as the spirit of it is copied, and the *principle* on which it proceeds is acted upon. If, neglectful of these, we attend to the letter only, we shall be betrayed into the most serious mistakes, since there are numerous actions recorded of the apostles in the government of the church, which it would be the height of folly and presumption to imitate. Above all things, it is necessary, before we proceed to found a rule of action on precedent, carefully to investigate the circumstances under which it occurred, and the reasons on which it was founded. The apostles, it is acknowledged, admitted none to the Lord's supper, but such as were previously baptized; but under what circumstances did they maintain this course? It was at a time when a mistake respecting the will of the Supreme Legislator on the subject of baptism was impossible; it was while a diversity of opinion relating to it could not possibly subsist, because inspired men were at hand, ready to remove every doubt, and satisfy the mind of every honest inquirer. It was under circumstances that must have convicted him who declined compliance with that ordinance, of wilful prevarication, and stubborn resistance to the delegates and representatives of Christ, who commissioned them to promulgate his laws, with an express assurance that "whoever rejected them, rejected him, and whoever received them, received him," and that to refuse to obey

their word, exposed the offender to a severer doom than was allotted to Sodom and Gomorrah.* Their instructions were too plain to be mistaken, their authority too sacred to be contemned by a professor of christianity, without being guilty of daring impiety. In such a state of things, it may be asked, how could they have acted differently from what they did? To have received into the church men who disputed their inspiration and despised their injunctions, would have been to betray their trust, and to renounce their pretensions as the living depositaries of the mind of Christ: to have admitted those who, believing their inspiration, yet refused a compliance with their orders, would have let into the church the most unheard-of licentiousness, and polluted it, by incorporating with its members the worst of men. Neither of these could be thought of, and no other alternative remained but to insist as a test of sincerity on a punctual compliance with what was known and acknowledged as the apostolic doctrine. "We are of God," says St. John: "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."† In short, the apostles refused to impart the external privileges of the church to such as impugned their authority, or contemned their injunctions, which, whoever persisted in the neglect of baptism at that time, and in those circumstances, must necessarily have done.

* Matt. x. 14, 15. † 1 John iv. 6.

But in declining the communion of modern pædobaptists, however eminent their piety, there is really nothing analogous to that method of proceeding. The resemblance fails in its most essential features. In repelling an unbaptized person from their communion, supposing such a one to have presented himself, they would have rejected the violator of a known precept; he whom we refuse is, at most, chargeable only with mistaking it. The former must either have neglected an acknowledged precept, and thus evinced a mind destitute of principle, or he must have set the authority of the apostles at defiance, and thus have classed with parties of the worst description. Our pædobaptist brethren are exposed to neither of these charges: convince them that it is their duty to be baptized, in the method which we approve, and they stand ready, many of them at least, we cannot doubt, stand ready to perform it; convince them that it is a necessary inference from the correct interpretation of the apostolic commission, and they will, without hesitation, bow to that authority.

The most rigid baptist will probably admit that, however clear and irresistible the evidence of his sentiments may appear to himself, there are those whom it fails to convince, and some of them, certainly, illustrious examples of piety; men who would tremble at the thought of deliberately violating the least of the commands of Christ or of his apostles; men whose character and principles, consequently, form a striking contrast with those

of the persons whom it is allowed the apostles would have repelled. But to separate ourselves from the best of men, because the apostles would have withdrawn from the worst, to confound the broadest moral distinctions, by awarding the same treatment to involuntary and conscientious error which they were prepared to inflict on stubborn and wilful disobedience, is certainly a very curious method of following apostolic precedent. "The letter killeth," says St Paul, "the spirit maketh alive." Whether the contrariety of these was ever more strongly marked, than by such a method of imitating the apostles, let the reader judge.

For the clearer illustration of this point, let us suppose a case. A person proposes himself as a candidate for admission to a baptist church. The minister inquires into his views of the ordinance of baptism, and respectfully asks whether he is convinced of the divine authority of the rite which was administered to him in his infancy. He confesses he is not, that on mature deliberation and inquiry he considers it as a human invention. On his thus avowing his conviction, he is urged to confess Christ before men, by a prompt compliance with what he is satisfied is a part of his revealed will: he hesitates, he refuses, alleging that it is not essential to salvation, that it is a mere external rite, and that some of the holiest of men have died in the neglect of it. Here is a parallel case to that of a person who should have declined the ordinance of baptism in primitive

times; and in entire consistence with the principles which we are maintaining, we have no hesitation in affirming, that the individual in question is disqualified for christian communion. To receive him under such circumstances, would be sanctioning the want of principle, and pouring contempt on the christian precepts. Yet the conduct we have now supposed would be less criminal than to have shrunk from baptism in the apostolic age, because the evidence by which our views are supported, though sufficient for every practical purpose, is decidedly inferior to that which accompanied their first promulgation: the utmost that we can pretend, is a very high probability; the primitive converts possessed an absolute certainty. Now since we are prepared to visit a degree of delinquency inferior to that which would have ensured the rejection of a candidate by the apostles, with the same severity, how preposterous is it to charge us with departing from apostolical precedent! In the same circumstances, or in circumstances nearly the same, we are ready instantly to act the same part: let the circumstances be essentially varied, and our proceeding is proportionably different. The apostles refused the communion of such, and such only, as were insincere, "who held the truth in unrighteousness," avowing their conviction of one system, and acting upon another: and wherever similar indications display themselves, we do precisely the same. They admitted the weak and erroneous, providing their

errors were not of a nature subversive of christianity; and so do we. They tolerated men whose sentiments differed from their own, providing they did not rear the standard of revolt, by a deliberate resistance to the only infallible authority; and such precisely is the course we pursue. We bear with those who mistake the dictates of inspiration, in points which are not essential; but with none who wilfully contradict, or neglect them. In the government of the church, as far as our means of information reach, the immediate ambassadors of Christ appear to have set us an example of much gentleness and mildness, to have exercised a tender consideration of human imperfection, and to have reserved all their severity for a contumacious rejection of their guidance, and disdain of their instructions. And wherever these features appear, we humbly tread in their steps; being as little disposed as they, to countenance or receive those who impugn their inspiration, or censure their decisions.

They were certainly strangers to that scheme of ecclesiastical polity, which proposes to divide the mystical body of Christ into two parts, one consisting of such as enjoy communion with him, the other of such as are entitled to commune with each other. In no part of their writings, is the faintest vestige to be discerned of that state of things of which our opponents are enamoured, where a vast majority of sincere christians are deemed disqualified for christian fellowship, and

while their pretensions to acceptance with God, and a title to eternal life, are undisputed, are yet to be kept in a state of seclusion from the visible church. Had they in any part of their Epistles appeared to broach such a doctrine; had they lavished high encomiums on the faith and piety of those with whom they refused to associate at the Lord's supper, our astonishment at sentiments so singular and so eccentric, would have been such, that scarcely any conceivable uniformity of manuscripts or of versions could have accredited the passages that contained them. That the primitive church was composed of professed believers, and none debarred from its privileges, but such whose faith was essentially erroneous, or their character doubtful, is a matter of fact which appears on the very surface of the inspired records, and was probably never called in question, in any age or country, until an opposite principle was avowed and acted upon by the modern baptists, who appropriate its title and its immunities to themselves, while, with strange inconsistency, they proclaim their conviction, that the persons whom they exclude are indisputably in possession of its interior and spiritual privileges. For this portentous separation of the internal from the outward and visible privileges of christianity; for confining the latter to a mere handful of such as have "obtained like precious faith with themselves," in vain will they seek for support in the example of the apostles. They repeatedly and earnestly warn us against

resting in external advantages, and of the danger of substituting the outward sign for the inward and spiritual grace; but never give the slightest intimation of the possibility of possessing the first, without being entitled to the last. The assertion of such an opinion, and the practice founded upon it, the reader will at once perceive, is a departure from the precedent and example of the earliest age, which it would be difficult to parallel.

In opposition, however, to all that has been urged to shew the obvious disparity between the two cases, our opponents still reiterate the cry, The apostles did not tolerate the omission of baptism, and therefore we are not justified in tolerating it! But is the omission of a duty to be judged of in relation to its moral quality, without any regard to circumstances, without any consideration, whether it be voluntary or involuntary, whether it proceed from perversity of will, or error of judgement, from an erroneous interpretation of our Lord's precepts, or a contempt of his injunctions; and supposing our pædobaptist brethren to be sincere and conscientious, is there any resemblance between them and those whom the apostles, it is allowed, would have repelled, except in the mere circumstance of their being both unbaptized, the one because they despised the apostolic injunctions, the other because they mistake them? The former (supposing them to have existed at all) must have been men over whose conscience the word of God had no power; the latter tremble

at his word, and are restrained from following our example by deference to his will. If such opposite characters are the natural objects of a contrary state of feeling, they must be equally so of a contrary treatment; nor can any thing be more preposterous than to confound them together, under the pretence of a regard to apostolic precedent. Our treatment of mankind should undoubtedly be the expression of our feelings, and regulated by our estimate of their character. Strict communion prescribes the contrary; it sets the conduct and the feelings at variance, and erects into a duty the mortification of our best and holiest propensities.

The discipline of the church, as prescribed by Christ and his apostles, is founded on principles applicable to every age, and to every combination of events to which it is liable, in a world replete with change, where new forms of error, new modes of aberration from the paths of rectitude and truth, are destined to follow in rapid and unceasing succession. Among these we are compelled to enumerate the prevailing notions of the christian world on the subject of baptism—an error, which, it is obvious, could have no subsistence during the age of the apostles. Here, then, arises a new case, and it becomes a matter of serious inquiry, how it is to be treated. It plainly cannot be decided by a reference to apostolic precedent, because nothing of this kind then existed, or could exist. The precept which enjoined the baptism of new

converts, might be resisted, but it could not be mistaken, and therefore no inference can be drawn from the treatment, which, it is admitted, the apostles would have assigned to wilful disobedience, that is applicable to the case of involuntary error. The only method of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, is to consider how they conducted themselves towards sincere, though erring christians, together with the temper they recommend us to cultivate towards such as labour under mistakes and misconceptions, not inconsistent with piety. Without expecting a specific direction for the regulation of our conduct in this identical particular, which would be to suppose the error in question *not* new, it is quite sufficient if the general principle of toleration which the New Testament enjoins, is found to comprehend the present instance.

If action be founded on conviction, as it undoubtedly is in all well-regulated minds, we are as much obliged to mould our sentiments into an agreement with those of the apostles, as our conduct: inspired precedents of thought are as authoritative as those of action. The advocates of strict communion are clamorous in their demand that, in relation to church fellowship, we should treat all pædobaptists exactly in the same manner as the apostles would have treated unbaptized persons in their day. But must we not for the same reason *think* the same of them? This, however, they disclaim as much as we do: they

are perfectly sensible, nor have they the hardihood to deny, that the difference is immense, between a conscientious mistake of the mind of Christ, on a particular subject, and a deliberate contempt or neglect of it. Who can doubt that the apostles would be the first to feel this distinction; and, as they would undoubtedly, in common with all conscientious persons, regulate their conduct by their sentiments, that, could they be personally consulted, they would recommend a correspondent difference of treatment? To sum up the argument in a few words. Nothing can be more hollow and fallacious than the pretension of our opponents that they are guided by inspired precedent, for we have no precedent in the case; in other words, we have no example of the manner in which they conducted themselves towards such as fell into an error on the subject of baptism; the Scriptures make no allusion to such an error which attaches at present to many most tenacious of its authority, humbly submissive to its dictates, and deeply imbued with its spirit; to men, in a word, of the most opposite character to those who may be supposed, in consequence of setting light by the authority of inspired teachers, to have neglected baptism in the first ages.

Thus much may suffice for apostolic precedent. There is still one more view of the subject to which the attention of the reader is requested for a moment. It remains to be considered whether there is any *peculiar connexion* between the two

ordinances, of baptism and the Lord's supper, either in the nature of things or by divine appointment, so as to render it improper to administer the one without the other. That there is no *natural* connexion is obvious. They were instituted at different times, and for different purposes; baptism is a mode of professing our faith in the blessed Trinity, the Lord's supper as a commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer: the former is the act of an individual, the latter of a society. The words which contain our warrant for the celebration of the eucharist, convey no allusion to baptism whatever: those which prescribe baptism carry no anticipative reference to the eucharist. And as it is demonstrable that John's baptism was a separate institution from that which was enacted after our Lord's resurrection, the Lord's supper is evidently *anterior* to baptism, and the original communicants consisted entirely of such as had not received that ordinance. To all appearance, the rites in question rest on independent grounds. But perhaps there is a *special* connexion between the two, arising from *divine appointment*. If this be the case, it will be easy to point it out. Rarely, if ever, are they mentioned together, and on no occasion is it asserted, or insinuated, that the validity of the sacrament depends on the previous observation of the baptismal ceremony. That there was such a connexion between circumcision and the passover, we learn from the explicit declaration of Moses,

who asserts that "no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." Let a similar prohibition be produced in the present instance, and the controversy is at an end.

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, in a posthumous pamphlet on this subject, laboured hard to prove an *instituted* connexion between the two ordinances, but his conclusion from the premises is so feeble and precarious, that we strongly suspect his own mind was not fully made up on the subject. His reasoning is certainly very little adapted to satisfy an impartial inquirer. The whole performance appears more like an experiment of what might be advanced in favour of a prevailing hypothesis, than the result of deep and deliberate conviction.

On this point our opponents are at variance with each other; Mr. Kinghorn roundly asserts that baptism has no more connexion with the Lord's supper than with *every other part* of christianity. Thus what Mr. Fuller attempts to demonstrate as the main pillar of his cause, Mr. Kinghorn abandons without scruple. What a fortunate position is that to which men may arrive, who proceed in the most opposite directions—a sort of mental antipodes which you will reach with equal certainty, whether you advance by the east or by the west. From the title of Mr. Kinghorn's book, which is, "Baptism a term of Communion," we should be led to expect that it was his principal object to trace some *specific* relation which these

rites bear to each other. No such thing: he denies there is any such relation: baptism, he declares, is no otherwise connected with the Lord's supper than it is with every other part of christianity. But on his hypothesis, it is essential to the eucharist, and consequently it is essential to every part of christianity; so that the omission of it, from whatever cause, is such an error in the first concoction, that it vitiates every branch of religion, disqualifies for all its duties, and incurs the forfeiture of all its privileges. This is the statement of a man who makes loud professions of attachment to our pædobaptist brethren; nor can he escape from this strange dilemma but by retracing his steps, and taking his stand with Mr. Fuller on a supposed *instituted* relation between the two ordinances. Meanwhile, it is instructive to observe, in what inextricable labyrinths the acutest minds are entangled, which desert the high road of common sense, in pursuit of fanciful theories.

Having cleared the way, by shewing that scripture precedent, properly interpreted, affords no countenance or support to strict communion, the remaining task is very easy. For nothing can be more evident, than that the whole genius of christianity is favourable to the most cordial and affectionate treatment of our fellow-christians. To love them fervently, to bear with their imperfections, and cast the mantle of forgiveness over their infirmities, is to fulfil the law of Christ. A schism in his mystical body is deprecated as the greatest

evil, and whatever tends to promote it is subjected to the severest reprobation. "Now I beseech you, by the name of the Lord Jesus," is the language of St. Paul, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement. For it has been declared unto me, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" In applying these, and innumerable other passages of similar import to the point under discussion, two questions occur. First, Are our pædobaptist brethren a part of the mystical body of Christ? or, in other words, Do they form a portion of that church, which he has purchased by his precious blood? If they are not, they are not in a state of salvation, since none can be in that state who are not vitally united to Christ. The Bible acknowledges but two classes into which the whole human race is distributed, the church and the world; there is no intermediate condition; whoever is not of the first, necessarily belongs to the last. But the advocates for strict communion are loud in their professions of esteem for pious pædobaptists, nor is there any thing they would more resent, than a doubt of their sincerity in that particular. The persons

whom they exclude from their communion are then, by their own confession, a part of the flock of Christ, a portion of his mystical body, and of that church which he has bought with his blood.

The next question is, whether a formal separation from them, on the account of their imputed error, amounts to what the scripture styles *schism?* Supposing one part of the church at Corinth had formally severed themselves from the other, and established a separate communion, allowing those whom they had forsaken, at the same time, the title of sincere christians, would this have been considered as a *schism?* That it would, is demonstrable from the language of St. Paul, who accuses the Corinthians of having *schisms** among them, though they never dreamed of forming a distinct and separate communion. If they are charged with schism, on account of that spirit of contention, and that alienation of their affections from each other, which merely tended to an open rupture, how much more would they have incurred that censure, had they actually proceeded to that extremity? *Schism,* in its primitive and literal sense, signifies the breaking of a substance into two or more parts, and when figuratively applied to a body of men, it denotes the division of it into parties; and though it may be applied to such a state of contention as consists with the preservation of external union, it is most eminently applicable to a society whose bond of union is

* The original word rendered divisions, is σχισματα, *schisms.*

dissolved, and where one part rejects the other from its fellowship. If there is any meaning in terms, this is schism in its highest sense. The great apostle of the Gentiles illustrates the union of the faithful, by that which subsists between the members of the natural body. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." He shews, in a beautiful and impressive manner, that the several members have each his distinct function, and are pervaded by a common sympathy, with the express design "that there be no schism in the body." But when one part of the christian church avowedly excludes another from their communion, when they refuse to unite in the most distinguishing branch of social worship, and hold themselves in a state of seclusion, they virtually say to the party thus repelled, "We have no need of thee;" they cut themselves off from the body, and are guilty of a schism so open and conspicuous, that none can fail to perceive it. How is it possible for them to evade the conclusion to which this reasoning conducts us, unless they are prepared to deny the claim of the pædobaptists to be regarded as the members of Christ, or place them in some intermediate station betwixt the world and the church? But the language of the New Testament, which uniformly identifies the objects of the divine favour with the members of Christ's church, is directly opposed to such a fiction. "He loved the *church*, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by

the washing of water through the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

It deserves the serious consideration of our opponents, that they are *contending* for that schism in the body of Christ, against which he so fervently prayed, so anxiously guarded, and which his apostles represent as its greatest calamity and reproach. "The glory," said our Lord, "which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Here it cannot be doubted that our pædobaptist brethren are comprehended in this prayer, because our Lord declares it was preferred, not merely for the disciples then existing, but for those also who should hereafter believe through their word, adding, "that they *all* may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." In these words, we find him praying for a visible union among his disciples—such a union as the world might easily perceive; and this he entreats in behalf of them all, that they *all* may be one. The advocates of strict communion plead for a visible *disunion;* nor will it avail them to reply that they cultivate a fraternal affection towards christians of other denominations, while they insist on such a visible

separation as must make it apparent to the world that they are *not* one. Internal sentiments of esteem are cognizable only by the Searcher of hearts; external indications are all that the world has to judge by; and so far are they from exhibiting these, that they value themselves in maintaining such a position towards their fellow-christians as confounds them, in a very important point, with infidels and heathens. If a rent and division in the body is pregnant with so much scandal and offence as the Scriptures represent it, if the spirit of love and concord is the distinguishing badge of the christian profession, it is surprising it has never occurred to them, that by insisting on such a separation as was unheard of in the primitive times, every approach to which is denounced in scripture as a most serious evil, they are acting in direct opposition to the genius of the gospel, and the solemn injunctions of its inspired teachers. What degree of criminality may attach to such a procedure it is not for us to determine; but we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is most abhorrent from the intention of the Head of the church, and miserably compensated by that more correct view of the ordinance of baptism, which is alleged in its support. "Charity is the end of the commandment," "the fulfilling of the law;" and since the religion of Christ is not ceremonial, but vital, and consists less in correct opinions, and ritual observances, than in those graces of the Spirit, which are the "hidden man of the heart,"

it deserves serious consideration, whether so palpable a violation of the unity of the church, is not more offensive in the eyes of Him who "tries the hearts and the reins," than an involuntary mistake of a ceremonial precept.

Here we must be allowed once more to recur to the vain boast of a scrupulous adherence to the example of the apostles, (the futility of which has, I trust, been sufficiently demonstrated,) and request our opponents to reflect for a moment on their essential deviation in this particular. Say, did the apostles refuse the communion of good men? Did they set the example of dividing them into two classes, a qualified and a disqualified class; and while they acknowledged the latter were objects of the divine favour, equally with themselves, enjoin on their converts the duty of disowning them at the Lord's table? Are any traces to be discovered in the New Testament of a society of *Purists*, who, under the pretence of superior illumination on one subject, kept themselves aloof from the christian world, excluding from their communion myriads of those whom they believed to be heirs of salvation? Did they narrow their views of church fellowship, as Mr. Kinghorn avows is the case of the modern baptists, to the purpose of holding up to view *one neglected truth?* On this plan, as many separate communions will be witnessed as there are varieties of religious taste and predilection, while each fancies it perceives some neglected duty, or some truth not rendered sufficiently prominent,

till almost every inquiry will give birth to some solitary and antisocial sect. The direct tendency of such a principle, is not merely to annihilate the unity of the church, but to contract the heart, to narrow the understanding, and, in the room of "holding forth the word of life," to invest every petty speculation, and minute opinion, with the dignity of a fundamental truth.

The revival or propagation of some one particular truth, being the avowed object of their union, the members of such a society will almost inevitably attach to it an undue importance; and, as their attention will be chiefly directed towards that in which they differ from others, and in which they are conceived to excel, it will be a miracle if they escape a censorious, conceited, disputatious spirit. While their constitution is founded, not so much on a separation from the world, as from the church, they will be almost irresistibly tempted to transfer to the latter, a large portion of the associations and feelings, of which the former is the proper object.

How refreshing is it to turn from these rigid and repulsive principles, to the contemplation of the generous maxims of the New Testament! "Him that is weak in the faith," says St. Paul, "receive ye, not to doubtful disputations;"* and after illustrating his meaning, by adducing examples of various diversities of sentiment amongst his converts, he proceeds to inculcate the most perfect

* Rom. xiv. 1.

mutual toleration. It is observable, that the differences of opinion which he specifies related to the obligation of certain positive institutes, to which, though abrogated by the new dispensation, part of the church adhered, while its more enlightened members understood and embraced the liberty with which Christ had made them free. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." A moment's attention to the connexion will convince the reader, that the term *weak*, in both these passages, denotes persons whose conceptions are erroneous; for the inspired writer is not adverting to the different degrees of conviction with which the same truths are embraced, but to a palpable difference of judgement. Thus far, the case here decided is precisely similar to that under present discussion: our difference from the pædobaptists turns on the nature and obligation of a positive institute. The error of which St. Paul enjoined the toleration, consisted in adhering to certain ceremonies which had been abrogated; the error with which we are concerned, consists in mistaking a ceremony which is still in force. Neither of the ancient, nor of the modern error, is it pretended that they are fundamental, or that they endanger the salvation of those who hold them. Thus far they stand on the same footing, and the presumption is that they ought to be treated in the same manner. Before we come to this conclusion, however, it behoves us to examine the

principle on which the apostle enjoins toleration, and if this is applicable in its full extent to the case of our pædobaptist brethren, no room is left for doubt. The *principle* plainly is, that the error in question was not of such magnitude as to preclude him who maintained it from the favour of God. "Let not him who eateth, despise him who eateth not; and let not him who eateth not, judge him who eateth; *for God hath received him.* Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; *for God is able to make him stand.*" In the same manner, in the next chapter of the same Epistle, after reminding the strong that it is their duty to bear the infirmities of the weak, he adds, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of the Father." If such is the reason assigned for mutual toleration, and it is acknowledged to be a sufficient one, which none can deny without impeaching the inspiration of the writer, it is as conclusive respecting the obligation of tolerating every error which is consistent with a state of salvation, as if that error had been mentioned by name; and as few, if any, are to be met with who doubt the piety of many pædobaptists, it not only justifies their reception, but renders it an indispensable duty. Nothing can be more futile than the attempt to turn aside the edge of this reasoning, by remarking that there is no mention of baptism, and that this is not the subject of which

St. Paul is treating, as though the Bible contained no general principles, no maxims of universal application, but, that precise directions must be found for every possible emergence that in the lapse of ages may occur. Were it constructed upon this plan, the Bible must be infinitely more voluminous than the statutes at large. It is composed on one widely different: it gives general rules of action, broad principles, leaving them to be applied under the guidance of sound discretion; and wherever it has decided a doubtful question, accompanied with an express statement of the principle on which the decision is founded, such explanation has all the force of an apostolic canon, by which we are bound to regulate our conduct in all the variety of cases to which it applies. Hence we have only one alternative, either to deny that those who differ from us on the subject of baptism are accepted of God, or to receive them into fellowship, on exactly the *same ground,* and on the *same principle,* that Paul enjoined the toleration of sincere Christians.

Before I dismiss this part of the subject, on which the patience of the reader has been severely tasked, I must beg leave to notice a striking inconsistence in the advocates of strict communion. Nothing is more certain than that the communion of saints is by no means confined to one particular occasion, or limited to one transaction, such as that of assembling around the Lord's table; it extends to all the modes by which believers

recognise each other as the members of a common head. Every expression of fraternal regard, every participation in the enjoyments of social worship, every instance of the unity of the Spirit exerted in prayer and supplication, or in acts of christian sympathy and friendship, as truly belongs to the communion of saints, as the celebration of the eucharist. In truth, if we are strangers to communion with our fellow-christians on other occasions, it is impossible for us to enjoy it there; for the mind is not a piece of mechanism which can be set going at pleasure, whose movements are obedient to the call of time and place. Nothing short of an habitual sympathy of spirit, springing from the cultivation of benevolent feeling, and the interchange of kind offices, will secure that reciprocal delight, that social pleasure, which is the soul of christian communion. Its richest fruits are frequently reserved for private conference, like that in which the two disciples were engaged, in their way to Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them, while the Lord opened to them the Scriptures. When they take sweet counsel together, as they go to the house of God in company, when they bear each other's burthens, weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice; say, have christians no mutual fellowship? Is it not surprising that, losing sight of such obvious facts, our opponents always reason on the subject of communion as though it related merely to the sacrament? In every other particular they act just as we do.

However our opponents may deviate from scripture, let them at least be consistent with themselves, and either follow out their own principles to their just consequence, by withholding from the members of other denominations every token of fraternal regard, or freely admit them to the Lord's table. As the case stands at present, their mode of proceeding is utterly untenable. In a variety of instances they indulge themselves in those acts of communion with pædobaptists which are peculiar to christians: they frequently make them their mouth in addressing the Deity; they exchange pulpits; and even engage their assistance in exercises intended as a preparation for the eucharist; and after lighting the flame of devotion at their torch, they most preposterously turn round to inform them, that they are not worthy to participate. It would be difficult to convince a stranger to our practice, that it were possible to be guilty of such an absurdity. Is the observance of an external rite, let me ask, a more solemn part of religion than addressing the Majesty of heaven and of earth? And shall we depute *him* to present our prayers at His footstool, who would defile a sacrament by his presence? Suppose them to relax from their rigour, and to admit pious pædobaptists to their fellowship, to what would it amount? To nothing more than a public acknowledgement of their union to Christ, and their interest in his benefits; and as they fully acknowledge both, why scruple to do it at the table

of their common Lord? Why select an ordinance designed for the commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer as the signal for displaying the banners of party; and, by reviving the remembrance of differences, elsewhere consigned to oblivion, give the utmost publicity to dissensions, which are the reproach of the church, and the triumph of the world?

The only colour invented to disguise this glaring inconsistency is so pure a logomachy, that it is difficult to speak of it with becoming gravity. They remind us, forsooth, that the expressions of christian affection in praying and preaching for each other are not church acts, as though there were some magic in the word church that could change the nature of truth, or the obligations of duty. If it is our duty to recognise those as fellow-christians who are really such, what is there in the idea of a church that should render it improper there? If the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," it is the proper place for the fullest disclosure of its secrets; and if christians are under an obligation to love each other with a pure heart, fervently, its organization can never have been designed to contract the heart, by confining the movements and expressions of charity within narrower limits. The duty of churches originates in that of the individuals of which they consist, so that when we have ascertained the sentiments and principles which ought to actuate the christian in his private capacity, we possess

the standard to which the practice of churches should be uniformly adjusted.

Nor is it in this particular only, that the persons whose opinions we are controverting are betrayed into lamentable inconsistency. Their concessions on another branch of the subject, lay them open to the same imputation. They acknowledge that many pædobaptists stand high in the favour of God; enjoy intimate communion with the Redeemer; and would, on their removal hence, be instantaneously admitted to glory. Now, it seems the suggestion of common sense, that the greater includes the less, that they who have a title to the most sublime privileges of christianity, the favour of God, the fellowship of Christ, and the hope of glory, must be unquestionably entitled to that ordinance whose sole design is to prepare us for the perfect fruition of these blessings. To suppose it possible to have an interest in the great redemption, without being allowed to commemorate it; that he may possess the substance who is denied the shadow, and, though qualified for the worship of heaven, be justly debarred from earthly ordinances, is such an anomaly as cannot fail to draw reprobation on the system of which it is the necessary consequence. Men will, ere long, tremble at the thought of being more strict than Christ, more fastidious in the selection of the members of the church militant, than he is in choosing the members of the church triumphant.

Hitherto our attention has been occupied in

stating the arguments in favour of mixed communion, and replying to the objections to that practice. It is but justice to the subject and to the reader, before we close the discussion, to touch on another topic.

In every inquiry relating to christian duty, our first concern should undoubtedly be to ascertain the will of the Supreme Legislator; but when this has been done to our satisfaction, we may be allowed to examine the practical tendency of different systems, the effect of which will be to confirm our preference of that course of action which we have found most consonant with the oracles of truth. We are far from resting the merits of our cause on the basis of expedience; we are aware that whoever attempts to set the useful in opposition to the true, is misled by false appearances, and that it behoves us, on all occasions, fearless of consequences, to yield to the force of evidence. But having, in the preceding pages, proved, (we would hope to the satisfaction of the reader,) that the practice of strict communion has no support from scripture or reason, it cannot be deemed improper briefly to inquire into its tendency.

The first effect necessarily resulting from it, is a powerful prejudice against the party which adopts it. When all other denominations find themselves lying under an interdict, and treated as though they were heathens or publicans, they must be more than men not to resent it, or if

they regard it with a considerable degree of apathy, it can only be ascribed to that contempt which impotent violence is so apt to inspire. We are incompetent judges of the light in which our conduct appears to those against whom it is directed; but the more frequently we place ourselves in their situation, the less will be our surprise at the indications of alienation and disgust which they may evince. The very appellation of baptist, together with the tenets by which it is designated, becomes associated with the idea of bigotry; nor will it permit the mind which entertains that prejudice, to give an impartial attention to the evidence by which our sentiments are supported. With mingled surprise and indignation they behold us making pretensions which no other denomination of protestants assumes, placing ourselves in an attitude of hostility towards the whole christian world, and virtually claiming to be the only church of Christ upon earth. Fortified, as it is, by its claims to antiquity and universality, and combining in its exterior whatever is adapted to dazzle the imagination, and captivate the senses, there is yet nothing in the church of Rome that has excited more indignation and disgust than this very pretension. What then must be the sensation produced, when, in the absence of all these advantages, a sect, comparatively small and insignificant, erects itself on a solitary eminence from whence it repels the approach of all other christians! The power of prejudice to arrest the

progress of inquiry is indeed to be lamented; nothing could be more desirable than that every opinion should, in the first instance, be judged of by its intrinsic evidence, without regard to the conduct of the persons who embrace it; but the strength and independence of mind requisite to such an effort, are rather to be admired than expected. There are few who enter on the investigation of theological questions in that elevated state; secret antipathies or predilections will be sure to instil their venom, and obscure the perception of truth, and the suggestions of reason.

By the stern rejection of the members of all other denominations, until they have embraced our distinguishing tenets, what do we propose to effect—to intimidate or to convince? We can do neither. To intimidate is impossible, while there are others far more numerous than ourselves, ready to receive them with open arms. The hope of producing conviction by such an expedient is equally groundless and chimerical, since conviction is the result of evidence, and no light whatever can be pretended to be conveyed by interdicting their communion, unless it be that it manifests our intolerance. We propose to extirpate an error, and we plant a prejudice; and instead of attempting to soften and conciliate the minds of our opponents, we inflict a stigma. Professing serious concern that the ordinance of baptism, as it was practised in the first ages, is fallen into neglect, we attempt to revive an unpopular rite, by a mode of

procedure, which, without the remotest tendency towards the removal of error, or the elucidation of truth, answers no other purpose than to make *ourselves* unpopular.

By this preposterous conduct, we do all in our power to place our pædobaptist brethren beyond the reach of conviction. Since it is unreasonable to expect, however attractive the ministry, that a pious pædobaptist will statedly attend where he must despair of ever becoming a member, and of enjoying the privileges to which every serious person is supposed to aspire; he attaches himself, as a necessary consequence, to a connexion in which there is no such impediment, but where he is certain of hearing nothing but what will foster his prejudices, and confirm his error. Thus he is excluded from the only connexion where the arguments for adult baptism are stated, and is exposed to the constant operation of an opposite species of instruction. The practice which we are reprobating is nearly equivalent to an inscription over the door, Let none but baptists enter within these walls—an admirable expedient truly, for diffusing the baptist sentiments; about as rational as to send a man from London to Constantinople to study the evidences of christianity!

Mr. Kinghorn is delighted with this separation of the baptists from other denominations in the offices of devotion, avowing it as his opinion, that no pædobaptist can, without great impropriety, statedly attend the ministry of one of our deno-

mination. If we may judge from what he has written on this subject, he appears less anxious to promote and extend the peculiar tenets of the baptists, than to preserve inviolate their sacred seclusion and solitude. His sentiments on this subject will probably remind the poetical reader of Gray's beautiful description of the bird of night, which

> ——— "does to the moon complain
> Of such as, wandering near her secret bowers,
> Molest her ancient, solitary reign."

Whatever his intention may be, it must be obvious, that by the policy he recommends, of keeping the baptists and pædobaptists entirely separated from each other, even as hearers of the word, he is strengthening the barriers of party, building up a middle wall of partition, and by cutting off the channels of communication, and the means of conviction, resigning both to the entire and unmitigated operation of their respective systems. Is it possible to imagine any thing more calculated to stifle inquiry, to render the public mind stationary, and to perpetuate our divisions to the end of the world? From him who was really solicitous to extend the triumphs of truth, we should expect nothing would be more abhorrent than such a system; he surely would leave nothing unattempted to break down the rampart of prejudice; and by making the nearest approaches to his opponents, consistent with truth, avail himself of all

the advantages which a generous confidence seldom fails to bestow, for insinuating his sentiments, and promoting his views.

Of the tendency of mixed communion to promote a more candid inquiry into our principles, it is scarcely possible to doubt; whether it would have the effect of rapidly extending the baptist denomination *as such,* is less certain. For were that practice universally to prevail, the mixture of baptists and pædobaptists in christian societies would probably, ere long, be such, that the appellation of baptist might be found, not so properly applicable to churches as to individuals, while some more comprehensive term might possibly be employed to discriminate the views of collective bodies. But what then? Are we contending for names, or for things? If the effect of a more liberal system shall be found to increase the number of those who return to the primitive practice of baptism, and thus "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," he must be possessed of a deplorable imbecility and narrowness of mind, who will lament the disappearance of a name, especially when it is remembered that whenever just views on this subject shall become universal, the name by which we are at present distinguished will necessarily cease. An honest solicitude for the restoration of a divine ordinance to its primitive simplicity and purity, is not merely innocent but meritorious; but if the ultimate consequence of such an improvement should be to merge the appellation of a party in

that which is derived from the divine Founder of our religion, it is an event which none but a bigot will regret.

It were well, however, if the evil resulting from the practice of strict communion, were confined to its effect on other denominations. If I am not much mistaken, it exerts a pernicious influence on our own. Were it consistent with propriety, it would be easy to adduce exceptions; individuals have come within the narrow range of my own observation, whose temperament has been so happy, that they have completely surmounted the natural tendency of their principles, combining the greatest candour towards pædobaptists, with a conscientious refusal of their communion. Such instances, however, must, in the nature of things, be rare. Generally speaking, the adoption of a narrow and contracted theory will issue in a narrow and contracted mind. It is too much to expect that a habit of treating all other christians as aliens from the fold of Christ, and unworthy of a participation of the privileges of his church, can be generally unaccompanied with an asperity of temper, a proneness to doubt the sincerity, to censure the motives, and depreciate the virtues of those whom they are accustomed to treat with so much rigour. Conceiving themselves to be a highly privileged class, as the only legitimate members of his church, they are almost inevitably exposed to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; and founding their separation,

not on that which distinguishes the followers of Christ from the world, but on a point in which christians dissent from each other, they are naturally tempted to attach superlative importance to the grounds of difference.

The history of the present controversy affords a melancholy confirmation of these remarks; for the few who have ventured to appear on the liberal side of the question have, for the most part, been assailed by ungenerous insinuations, and odious personalities. Their claim to be considered as baptists is very reluctantly conceded, and the part they have taken has been imputed to the love of popularity, or to some still more unworthy motive. Some churches, in their zeal for strict communion, have even lost sight of their own principles, and substituted the doctrine opposed in these pages as a term of admission, instead of the ordinance of baptism. Others have refused the privilege of occasional communion to such as have been known to sit down with pædobaptists at the Lord's table.

Leaving, however, to those to whom it may be more grateful, the unwelcome office of exposing the infirmities of their brethren, let me close this subject by one more remark. In addition to all the other reasons for retracing our steps, we may, with great propriety, allege the spirit of the times, the genius of the age, distinguished, as it is, beyond all former example, by the union of christians in the promotion of a common cause, and their merging their minor differences in the cultivation of

great principles, and the pursuit of great objects. Instead of confining themselves, each to the defence of his own citadel, they are sallying forth in all directions, in order to make a powerful and combined attack on the kingdom of darkness. The church of Christ, no longer the scene of intestine warfare among the several denominations into which it is cantoned and divided, presents the image of a great empire, composed of distant, but not hostile provinces, prepared to send forth its combatants, at the command of its invisible Sovereign, to invade the dominions of Satan, and subdue the nations of the earth. The weapons of its warfare have already made themselves felt in the East and in the West; and wherever its banner is unfurled, it gathers around it, without distinction of name or sect, "the called, the chosen, the faithful," who, at the heart-thrilling voice of Him whose "vesture is dipped in blood," and who goes forth "conquering and to conquer," rush to the field, unmindful of every distinction but that of his friends and foes, and too eager for the combat to ask any other question, than, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" And is it possible, after mingling thus their counsels, their efforts, their prayers, and standing side by side, in the thickest of the conflict, in coming up "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," for them to turn their backs on each other, and refuse to unite at that table which is covered with the memorials of his love, and the fruits of his victory? No. As

we hope, when the warfare of time is accomplished, and these mortal tabernacles, in which it is performed, shall be dissolved, to celebrate a never-ending feast, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the whole army of the faithful, of every age, from every clime, and of every tongue, let us begin by feasting together here, to present a specimen of that harmony and love, which are at once the element and the earnest of eternal felicity.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

[WRITTEN IN 1786, OR 1787.]

CHARACTER OF CLEANDER.

[*Written in* 1786.]

"NEC ASPERA TERRENT."

WHOEVER contemplates the various calamities that fill the world, and the still more numerous avenues by which we are exposed to distress, will be affected with a sense of the misery of man. In this survey, we need not search for remote and distant evils; we need not crowd our imagination with the horrors of war, the progress of armies, or the desolation of states. In the most familiar walks of life we meet with scenes at which humanity must bleed: scenes of distress lie open on every side: every quarter is filled with the groans of the dying, and lamentations for the dead. In the mass of mankind we can scarcely select an individual in whose bosom there do not rankle unpublished griefs; and, could we look into the hearts of the most tranquil, we should often find them a prey to unpitied regrets, torn with anxiety, and bleeding with disappointments.

Retiring from this melancholy spectacle, without looking any further, we might be ready to consider the world as a great nursery of disease, a vast receptacle of miseries, filled with beings whom Providence has endowed with sensibility to suffer, rather than capacities to enjoy; but to him who views the moral influence of afflictions, the evils they are intended to correct, and the benefits they impart, they will appear in a very different light; he will consider them as at once the punishments of vice, and the cure of it. Sorrow is, indeed, the offspring of guilt, but the parent of wisdom. Stern in her aspect, and severe in her deportment, she is, however, sent on a message of mercy. She is destined to follow in the footsteps of intemperance, to break her enchantments, to expose her delusions, and to deliver from thraldom such as are entangled in her snares, or are sleeping in her arms. Whoever surveys the course of his past life, with a view to remark the false steps he has taken in it, will find that, as they have been preceded by indiscretion, they have been recalled by distress. To every object our attachment is proportioned to the pleasures we have received, or expect to receive, from it; and the passion will continue to be cherished as long as the recollection of it calls up ideas of pleasure rather than of pain. Now, every vicious pursuit is founded on indulgence, and disguised by inclination. To the licentious and abandoned, therefore, there is no prospect of the termination of their

vices, till, by actual experience of the miseries they inflict, they convey to the mind more sentiments of aversion than of love.

From the moment that the enchantment is dispelled, the false colours stripped off, they will be regarded as specious deformities and real dangers. Multitudes, who could never be persuaded by the calls of interest, or the voice of conviction, to restrain the licence of their passions, and abandon their criminal pursuits, have been reclaimed by the lash of adversity. The decay of health, the desertion of friends, and the neglect of the world, have not unfrequently softened those hardier spirits, to whom the charms of virtue have been displayed in vain.

Nor is sorrow less effectual in the correction of foibles, than in the extinction of vice. Cleander, in other respects a man of virtue and honour, had, from his infancy, accustomed himself to the unbounded indulgence of his tongue. Upon all occasions, he trod on the very brink of decorum, a total stranger to the delicacies of friendship, which generously hides the faults it cannot correct. His ridicule was turned on the imperfections of his friends and his enemies, with indiscriminate severity. The splendour of distinguished virtue, which sets at a distance the reproaches of the world, and almost sanctifies the blemishes of an illustrious character, exempted no foibles from the scourge of Cleander; but rather quickened his acuteness to remark, and his asperity to expose

them, as it furnished a display of his penetration in discovering imperfections where there appeared to the world nothing but unmingled excellence. It was, indeed, his delight to remark the shades of a brilliant character, and to portray with exactness the secret gradations of excellence by which it fell short of perfection. Yet, in Cleander, this conduct by no means sprang from envy of superior worth, or the malignant desire of degrading every one to his own level. He possessed the magnanimity of a virtuous mind, and disdained to lessen his own inferiority by any other means than that of honest emulation. It had its basis in a taste for ridicule, and the pride of wit. His deportment could not fail to issue in perplexity and distress. His enemies considered him as a kind of beast of prey, a savage of the desert, whom they were authorized to wound by every weapon of offence, some by open defamation, and some by poisoned arrows in the dark. His friends began to look upon him with alienation and distrust, esteeming their character too sacred to be suspended, for the sport of an individual, on the breezy point of levity and wit.

His appearance was a signal for general complaint; and he could scarcely enter into company hoping to enjoy the unmingled pleasures of social converse, but he had innumerable jealousies to allay, and misunderstandings to set right. He was every where received with marks of disgust; met with resentment for which he could not account;

and was daily obliquely insulted for careless strokes of satire, of which he retained no recollection. Wherever he turned himself, he found his path was strewed with thorns; and that even they who admired his wit secretly vilified his character, and shrunk from his acquaintance. His peace began to bleed on every side; his reputation was tarnished; his fairest prospects blasted; and Cleander, at length, awakened from his delusions, was convinced, when it was too late, of a lesson he had often been taught in vain, that the attachments of friendship, and the tranquillity of life, are too valuable to be sacrificed to a blaze of momentary admiration.

A consideration of the benefit of afflictions should teach us to bear them patiently, when they fall to our lot; and to be thankful to heaven for having planted such barriers around us, to restrain the exuberance of our follies and our crimes.

Let these sacred fences be removed; exempt the ambitious from disappointment, and the guilty from remorse; let luxury go unattended with disease, and indiscretion lead into no embarrassments or distresses; our vices would range without control, and the impetuosity of our passions have no bounds; every family would be filled with strife, every nation with carnage, and a deluge of calamities would break in upon us, which would produce more misery in a year than is inflicted by the hand of Providence in a lapse of ages.

A REVERIE.

[*Written in* 1786.]

"Aux peupliers qui bornent mon séjour,
J'avois juré de suspendre ma lyre ;
De respirer, d'être heureux sans délire,
D'oser sur tout, être heureux sans l'amour
J'avois juré ; mais je l'ai vu sourire,
Et sur son aîle il emporte aujourd'hui
Tous les sermens que j'ai faits contre lui."

Dorat.

ENGLISHED THUS:

"On the tall poplars which surround my cot,
And mark the bound'ries of my humble lot,
Where I so oft of Cupid's power have sang,
I fiercely swore my unstrung lyre to hang :
To breathe in peace—to taste the quiet joy
Of calm contentment, which can never cloy :
But more than all—to banish from my heart
Tormenting love, and its too pleasing smart :
Thus did I swear—but, listening Cupid smil'd,
And, whilst with his enchantments he beguil'd,
He wafted on his pinions far away
My fruitless oaths, rebellious to his sway."

Ineptus.

AFTER reading some passages in the fourth book of Virgil, in which he paints the distress of Dido, upon her being deserted by Æneas, I could not help revolving in my mind, with a good deal of

uneasiness, the miseries of love. My reflections threw me into a REVERIE, which presented to my mind an imaginary train of circumstances, which I shall now relate, hoping they may tend to cherish that virtuous sensibility which is the ornament of our nature. My fancy naturally carried me into the times of heathenish superstition, which I hope will be my apology for mentioning gods and goddesses. I imagined that the power of Love had occasioned general discontent, and that the different orders of men had entered into an agreement to petition Jupiter for her removal.

I thought that at the head of these complainers stood the men of learning and science; they lamented with vehemence the inroads of love, and that it often betrayed them from the paths of knowledge, into perplexity and intrigue. They alleged that it extinguished, in the bosom of the young, all thirst after laudable improvement, and planted in its stead frivolous and tormenting desires. That the pursuit of truth called for a tranquil and serene state of mind; whilst love was constantly attended with tumult and alarm. Whatever turn she takes, said they, she will ever be an enemy to labour; her smiles are too gay, and her disappointments too melancholy, for any serious application. They were grieved to see that so trifling a passion should occupy so much time and attention, and that man, who was formed to contemplate the heavens and the earth, should spend half his life in gaining the good graces of the

weaker and more inconsiderable part of his species. I thought I perceived that this turn for love and gallantry gave particular offence to the whole tribe of astronomers and profound philosophers. They saw, with indignation, that many of our youth were more anxious to explain a look than to solve a problem, and that they would often be playing with a fan when they should be handling a quadrant. It infatuates every one, said they, who is so unhappy as to be touched with it. He is often more attentive to every change of countenance in a celebrated beauty than to the phases of the moon; and is more anxious to be acquainted with all her manœuvres than with the motions of the whole planetary system. One in particular affirmed, upon his knowledge, that he had been acquainted with students in anatomy, who looked with more curiosity into the countenance of a young beauty than upon the dissection of a bullock's eye. Some, who pretended to see much farther than the vulgar, considered every thing relating to love as capricious and visionary. Since we are all formed of the same materials, it seemed to them very unreasonable that a little difference in form and colour should raise such violent commotions. Beauty, they said, was but a superficial covering, and every thing at the bottom was alike. Upon this principle, they looked upon it as the height of philosophy to view with indifference what has always given mankind the greatest pleasure. This humour they carried so far that they lamented

they could not strip nature herself of her delusions, as they termed them, by taking off those agreeable colourings of light and shade which lie upon objects around us, and give them all their richness and beauty. They would have been glad to have turned the creation into a colourless and dreary waste, that they might have wandered up and down, and taken a closer survey of it.

The next class of petitioners, I observed, were the men of business. They set out with remarking that they did not join in the complaints that were made against love upon their own account; for though they had been weak enough, in the younger part of their lives, to fall under its influence, it was many years since they had felt the slightest impression of it. They had in view the welfare of their children, and, this being neither more nor less than their affluence, they were led to consider love chiefly in the light of an expensive passion. Its little tendernesses and endearments appeared to them inexpressibly ridiculous, and they wondered how any body could be foolish enough to spend hours in tattling to women, without thinking to gain a farthing by it. They gave a long list of young men, who had been frugal and industrious, till they were enticed by love to prefer pleasure to profit. They declared that when we take an account of balls and treats, and trinkets of various kinds, with the loss of time inseparably attendant upon them, it was at the peril of a fortune to attempt the heart of a beloved object. I was a good

deal amused with the manner in which they treated of love; they considered it as they would any other commodity, setting a price upon every part of it. They reckon a sigh at a shilling, and, if it chance to be observed by the person for whom it is intended, it was well even if half-a-guinea cleared the expense of it. A side glance was rated at half as much as a full view; they portioned out all the parts of a beautiful person, and made a valuation of each of them. The same scale was applied to their very attitudes: for the sight of a beautiful woman dancing was accounted a matter of enormous expense; and, if she chanced to smile with any degree of complacency upon any one, it was well if he was not ruined; under these impressions, they considered love as the certain forerunner of poverty.

There was one complaint raised against this passion, which I thought had something in it more plausible than any I have yet mentioned; it turned upon the ease with which it makes its approaches upon us, and the impossibility of guarding against its first advances. We have been able, said they, by art to manage the elements, so as in general to prevent any dangerous overflowings of them. We brave the storm in ships, and dive into the sea in bells; but the ingenuity of man has hit upon no contrivance to save us from the influence of love. Could we call it in to amuse a leisure hour, or to relieve the languor of a few tedious moments, and then dismiss it again, it might be esteemed a

blessing in a life so barren of enjoyment. But it is an influence that is shed all around us, and pours itself upon us in every corner. It often lies hid betwixt the keys of a harpsichord, and is shaken out with a few touches of the fingers. It flounces in an apron, and is trailed along with a flowing robe. No circumspection can preserve us from it; for it will often steal upon us when we are least upon our guard. It hides itself in a lock, and waves in ringlets of the hair. It will enter by an eye, an ear, a hand, or a foot. A glance and a gaze are sometimes equally fatal.

I was next presented with a scene which I thought as interesting and solemn as can enter into the imagination of man. This was no other than a view of the whole train of disappointed lovers. At the sight of them, my heart insensibly melted into the most tender compassion. There was an extreme dejection, mingled with a piercing wildness in their looks, that was very affecting. Cheerfulness and serenity, I could easily perceive, they had long been strangers to. Their countenances were overspread with a gloom which appeared to be of long standing, and to be collected there from dark and dismal imaginations. There was at the same time all that kind of animation in their features which betokens troubled thoughts. Their air and manner was altogether singular, and such as marks a spirit at once eager and irresolute. Their step was irregular, and they ever and anon started and looked around them, as though they

were alarmed by some secret terror. I was somewhat surprised, in looking through the whole assembly, not to see any one that wept. When they were arrived at the place where they had determined to present their united petitions, I was particularly attentive to observe every thing that passed. Though I listened, I could not learn any thing distinctly. After an interval of profound silence, a murmur only of broken sighs and piercing exclamations was heard through the assembly. I should have mentioned that some of them fell off before they had got to the place of rendezvous. They halted for some time, and continued in a melancholy suspense, whether they should turn back or go forward. They knew not which to prefer, the tranquillity of indifference or the tender distresses of love; at length they inclined to the latter, not having resolution even to wish for the extinction of a passion which mingled itself with the very elements of their existence. "Why," said they, "should we banish from our minds the image of all that is pleasing and delightful, and which, if we could once forget, there would be nothing left in the world worth remembering?" The agitation and anxiety felt upon this occasion, could I lay it fully open to the reader, would form a much more interesting picture than the deliberations of Cæsar, whether he should pass the Rubicon.

I imagined there were several other distinct bodies of men, who complained to the heavenly

powers of the tyranny of love, but, the particulars having in a great measure faded from my memory, the reader must excuse my passing them over in silence. I must not, however, forget to observe, that the number and unanimity of those who presented their petitions on the occasion were such, that they might fairly be considered as representing the sentiments of far the greater part of mankind.

Perhaps Providence never chastises the folly of men more justly than by granting the indulgence of their requests. Upon this occasion, I observed, their wishes were accomplished, and they were relieved from a tyranny of which they had so heavily complained. Upon an appointed day, the Goddess of love took her flight to the higher regions, from which she had descended; her influence was at once withdrawn, and all her enchantments were broken up. I thought nothing could equal the joy that was expressed upon this occasion. The air rung with acclamations, and every man was in haste to congratulate his neighbour on his deliverance from a thraldom which had sunk the spirit and degraded the dignity of the human race. They seemed all to be lightened of a load, and to break forth with fresh vivacity and spirit. Every one imagined he was entering upon quite a new career, and that the world was laid fresh open before him.

I could not help feeling an inward delight in seeing my fellow-creatures made at once so happy.

At the same time I was anxious to know what would follow upon this new revolution, and particularly whether it would answer the high expectations that were formed from it. Upon my looking around, I was a witness to appearances which filled me with melancholy and regret. A total change had taken place in the whole train of human affairs, and I observed to my sorrow, the change was every where for the worse. It was melancholy now to enter into company; for, instead of conversation, enlivened by vivacity and wit, there was nothing heard but a drowsy humming, to the last degree tiresome and insipid. In the social intercourse of men the heart had no place; pleasure, and the desire of pleasing, were equally unknown.

Those whom I had an opportunity of observing, I thought very much resembled the loungers and coxcombs of our day, who, without any view of receiving pleasure, mingle in a crowd, and engage in conversation, not to enjoy time, but to kill it. I now sought in vain for those friendly meetings at which I had often been present, where every one, desirous of adding something to the pleasure of the whole, drew forth the fairest ideas of his mind, and, by the display of tender sentiments, melted the heart, and soothed the imagination. With what regret did I recollect those conversation parties in which my heart was wont to be full, and to pour itself forth as we talked ourselves alternately into sadness and into joy!

I had an opportunity of correcting a mistake, into which I had fallen, in imagining that love reached only to courtship and marriage; I saw that it insensibly mingles with our most trifling actions, refining our thoughts, and polishing our manners, when we are least aware of it. The men had now entirely thrown aside that tenderness and gallantry which are the great ornaments of human nature, and are so peculiarly needful to temper and soften the rudeness of masculine strength. Men and women were now placed quite upon a level, so that the harmonious softness of the female voice was drowned in turbulence and noise. The ear was filled, but the heart was left empty. Politeness was exchanged for a tame civility, wit for merriment, and serenity for dulness. I began to think more highly than ever of the fair sex, and regarded them in a new light, as a beautiful mirror lying in the fancy of a lover, for him to dress his thoughts by. People were every where falling a prey to dejection, and complaining of the faintness of human enjoyments, as might well be expected, when the influence of love was withdrawn from them, which, by inspiring romantic hopes, and romantic fears, keeps the mind always in motion, and makes it run clear and bright. You may be sure nothing could make a more ridiculous appearance than courtship, at a time when women retained their vanity, after they had lost their charms. Such is the force of habit, that you might often see a pretty creature twirling her fan, and playing off

her little enchanting airs before her lover, who perhaps sat all that time perfectly insensible, fingering his buttons or picking his teeth. Vanity, I perceived, was a kind of instinct in women, that made them employ the whole artillery of their charms, when they knew they could do no execution. Indeed, their airs appeared so ridiculous now, in the eyes of the men, that they had often much ado to refrain from laughter. The coquettes particularly, in their flutterings to and fro, made as odd a figure as fish which should be frozen around in the very act of swimming. Out of respect to the ladies, however, I would compare them to the Grecian chiefs, who, according to the representation of the poets, carried with them so lively an impression of their former employments, that they would be marshalling their troops, and brandishing their swords, even in the shades below. However, the fair sex were soon relieved from this sort of ridicule. They no longer took any pains to smooth their brow, to soften their features into a smile, or to light up the beam of brightness in their eye. Careless of offending, where they knew they could not please, they became negligent in their persons, and vulgar in their air. I cannot express the regret I felt upon beholding the fairest and most beautiful part of the creation thus thrown into shade.

I thought I perceived that the fine arts began to languish, the paintings that made their appearance at the time were neither boldly sketched, nor

so brightly coloured as those I was wont to survey; they were chiefly confined to still life. I observed, however, that the extinction of love affected poetry still more than painting. It no longer regaled the mind with descriptions of beauty; or softened it with tender distress. Its enchantment was entirely dissolved; that enchantment that will carry us from world to world without moving from our seat, will raise a visionary creation around us, will make us to rejoice when there is nothing to rejoice in, and tremble when there is nothing to alarm us. These interesting situations, which awaken the attention, and enchain the mind in solemn suspense, till it breaks forth into agony or rapture, now no longer existed in nature, and were no longer described by the poet; he wrote rather from memory than feeling, for the breath of inspiration had ceased.

Upon this occasion I was not at all surprised at the decline of eloquence. I have often thought love the nurse of sensibility, and that, if it were not cherished by this passion, it would grow cold, and give way to a selfish indifference. My conjecture was now abundantly confirmed; for though I saw many discourses, composed at this time, that were well argued, elegant and correct, they all wanted those essential touches that give language its power of persuading.

One thing a good deal surprised me, and that was to observe that even the profound parts of learning were less attended to than ever. I was

well aware that few apply themselves closely to study, but with the hope of sometimes displaying their acquisitions to the public; and I had imagined fame was a sufficient recompense for any toil human nature could sustain; but I was surprised to find that, in all great and noble undertakings, the desire of appearing respectable in the eyes of a beloved object was of more consequence than the general admiration of mankind.

These I thought were not the only melancholy consequences that flowed from the departure of love. It may be sufficient, however, to observe in general that human nature was becalmed, and all its finest emotions frozen into a torpid insensibility. The situation of mankind was truly pitiable. Strangers to the delicate pleasures of the heart, every thing around them looked cheerless and barren. Calamity left them nothing to hope, and prosperity gave them nothing to enjoy.

I observed that they were now as desirous of bringing back the agency of love as they had been before to exclude it. At length, I imagined that Jupiter was touched with compassion at their unhappy situation, and appointed a day in which love was to revisit the abodes of men. An immense number of people, of all orders and ranks, and of every age and condition, assembled themselves, as you may suppose, to behold the descent of the Goddess, and to hail her approach. The heavens, I thought, glowed as she descended, and so many beautiful streaks of light glanced along the surface

of the sky that they divided it into separate tracts, brightened up every cloud within it, and turned the whole into an aerial landscape. The birds at the same time leaping among the branches, and warbling their sprightliest notes, filled the air with a confused melody of sounds that was inexpressibly delightful. Every thing looked brighter than before, every thing smelled sweeter, and seemed to offer up fresh incense to the Goddess. The face of nature was changed, and the creation seemed to grow new again. My heart glowed with delight. I rejoiced in the renovation of nature, and was revived through my inmost powers. There thrilled through me a delightful sensation of freshness and novelty, similar to what a happy spirit may be supposed to feel when he first enters a new state of existence, and opens his eyes on immortality.

I thought I had but a very confused idea of the person of the Goddess herself; for her raiment was so full of light and lustre that I could scarcely take a steady view of her. I observed, however, that her complexion was rather too glowing, and the motions of her eye too piercing and fiery for perfect feminine beauty. Her beauty, I thought, was too raised, and had too much glory in it, to be entirely attractive. I was very much astonished to observe that whoever she glanced her eye upon immediately fell under the influence of the passion over which she presided. It was a very singular sight, to see a whole assembly, one

after another, falling into love; and I was much entertained in observing the change it occasioned in the looks of each of them, according to their different temper and constitution. Some appeared wild and piercing, others dejected and melancholy. The features of several glowed with admiration, whilst others looked down with a timid and bashful respect. A trait of affectation was plainly to be discerned in all of them, as might well be expected from a passion the very first effect of which is to make one lose the possession of one's self. Several ladies in particular, seemingly careless and gay, were whispering to those who stood next them, and assuming airs of particular vivacity, whilst you might easily see their countenance was chequered with anxiety, lest they should chance not to please those upon whom they had fixed their affections. The greater part of the fair sex, however, I observed, smiled with an ineffable sweetness, nor could any thing appear more lovely than their features, upon which there was imprinted a tender reserve, mingled with modest complacency and desire. I imagined that after the Goddess had thoroughly surveyed the assembly, and they had seated themselves into some degree of composure, she thus addressed them:—

"Ye children of men, ye abound in the gifts of Providence, and many are the favours heaven has bestowed upon you. The earth teems with bounty, pouring forth the necessaries of life and the refinements of luxury. The sea refreshes you

with its breeze, and carries you to distant shores upon its bosom; it links nation to nation in the bonds of mutual advantage, and transfers to every climate the blessings of all. To the sun you are indebted for the splendour of the day, and the grateful return of season; it is he who guides you, as you wander through the trackless wilderness of space, lights up the beauties of Nature around you, and makes her break forth into fruitfulness and joy. But, know that these, though delightful, are not the pleasures of the heart. They will not heal the wounds of fortune; they will not enchant solitude, or suspend the feeling of pain. Know that I only am Mistress of the Soul. To me it belongs to impart agony and rapture. Hope and despair, terror and delight, walk in my train. My power extends over time itself, as well as over all sublunary beings. It can turn ages into moments, and moments into ages. Lament not the dispensations of Providence, amongst which the bestowment of my influence is one. He who feels it may not be happy; but he who is a stranger to it must be miserable."

ESSAY ON POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

[*Written in* 1787.]

It has been observed that it seldom falls to the share of one man to be both a philosopher and a poet. These two characters, in their full extent, may be said to divide betwixt them the whole empire of genius; for all the productions of the human mind fall naturally under two heads—works of imagination, and works of reason. There are indeed several kinds of composition which, to be perfect, must partake of both. In our most celebrated historians, for instance, we meet with a just mixture of the penetration that distinguishes the philosopher and the ardour of the poet; still their departments are very wide of each other, and a small degree of attention will be sufficient to shew why it is so extremely difficult to unite, in any high degree, the excellence of each. The end of the poet is to give delight to his reader, which he attempts by addressing his fancy, and moving his sensibility; the philosopher purposes merely to instruct, and therefore thinks it enough, if he presents his thoughts in that order which will render them the most perspicuous, and seems best

adapted to gain the attention. Their views demand, therefore, a very different procedure. All that passes under the eye of the poet, he surveys in one particular view; every form and image under which he presents it to the fancy are descriptive of its effects. He delights to paint every object in motion, that he may raise a similar agitation in the bosom of the reader. But the calm deliberate thinker, on the contrary, makes it his chief endeavour to seek out the remoter causes and principles which give birth to these appearances.

It is the highest exertion of a philosopher to strip off the false colours that serve to disguise, to remove every particular which fancy or folly have combined, and present to view the simple and naked truth. But the poet, who addresses the imagination and the heart, neglects no circumstance, however fanciful, which may serve to attach his descriptions more closely to the human mind. In describing the awful appearances of nature, he gladly avails himself of those magic terrors with which ignorance and superstition have surrounded them; for, though the light of reason dispels these shades, they answer the highest purpose of the poet, in awakening the passions. It is the delight of poetry to combine and associate; of philosophy, to separate and distinguish. The one resembles a skilful anatomist, who lays open every thing that occurs, and examines the smallest particulars of its make; the other a judicious painter, who conceals what would offend the eye,

and embellishes every subject he undertakes to represent: the same object, therefore, which has engaged the investigating powers of the philosopher, takes a very different appearance from the forming hand of the poet, who adds every grace of colouring, and artfully hides the nakedness of the inward structure, under all the agreeable foldings of elegance and beauty. In philosophical discussions, the end of which is to explain, every part ought to be unfolded with the most lucid perspicuity. But works of imagination never exert a more powerful influence than when the author has contrived to throw over them a shade of darkness and doubt. The reason of this is obvious; the evils we but imperfectly discern seem to bid defiance to caution; they affect the mind with a fearful anxiety, and, by presenting no limits, the imagination easily conceives them boundless. These species of composition differ still further with respect to the situation of mind requisite to produce them. Poetry is the offspring of a mind heated to an uncommon degree; it is a kind of spirit thrown off in the effervescence of the agitated feeling. But the utmost calmness and composure are essential to philosophical inquiry: novelty, surprise, and astonishment, kindle in the bosom the fire of poetry; whilst philosophy is reared up by cool and long continued efforts. There is one circumstance relating to this kind of composition too material to be omitted. In every nation it has been found that poetry is of much earlier date than

any other production of the human mind. As in the individual, the imagination and passions are more vigorous in youth, which in mature age subside, and give way to thought and reflection.

Something similar to this seems to characterize that genius which distinguishes the different periods of society. The most admired poems have been the offspring of uncultivated ages. Pure poetry consists of the descriptions of nature, and the display of the passions; to each of which a rude state of society is better adapted than one more polished. They who live in that early period in which art has not alleviated the calamities of life, are forced to feel their dependence upon nature. Her appearances are ever open to their view, and therefore strongly imprinted on their fancy. They shrink at the approach of a storm, and mark with anxious attention every variation of the sky. The change of seasons, cloud or sunshine, serenity and tempest, are to them real sources of sorrow and of joy; and we need not, therefore, wonder they should describe with energy what they feel with so much force. But it is one chief advantage of civilization that, by enabling us in some measure to control nature, we become less subject to its influence. It opens many new sources of enjoyment. In this situation, the gay and the cheerful can always mingle in company, whilst the diffusion of knowledge opens to the studious a new world, over which the whirlwind and the blast can exert no influence. The face of nature gradually retires

from view, and those who attempt to describe it often content themselves with copying from books, whereby their descriptions want the freshness and glow of original observation: like the image of an object reflected through various mediums, each of which varies somewhat of its form, and lessens its splendour. The poetry of uncivilized nations has, therefore, often excelled the productions of a more refined people, in elevation and pathos. Accustomed to survey nature only in her general form, and grander movements, their descriptions cannot fail of carrying with them an air of greatness and sublimity. They paint scenes which every one has felt, and which therefore need only to be presented to awaken a similar feeling again. For a while, they delight us with the vastness of their conceptions; but the want of various embellishments, and the frequent recurrence of the same images, soon fatigues the attention, and their poetry may be compared to the world of waters, which fills us with amazement, but upon which we gaze for a moment, and then turn away our eyes. It is the advantage of enlightened nations that their superior knowledge enables them to supply greater variety, and to render poetry more copious. They allure with an agreeable succession of images. They do not weary with uniformity, or overpower us with the continuance of any one exertion; but, by perpetually shifting the scene, they keep us in a constant hurry of delight.

"The Poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the Poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

Shakspeare's Midsummer-Night's Dream.

I cannot help observing that poetical genius seems capable of much greater variety than talents for philosophizing. The power of thinking and reasoning is a simple energy, which exerts itself in all men nearly in the same manner; indeed, the chief varieties that have been observed in it may be traced to two—a capacity of abstract and mathematical reasoning, and a talent for collecting facts and making observations; these qualities of mind, blended in various proportions, will, for the most part, account for any peculiarities attending men's modes of thinking. But the ingredients that constitute a poet are far more various and complicated. A poet is, in a high degree, under the influence of the imagination and passions, principles of mind very various and extensive. Whatever is complicated is capable of much greater variety, and will be extremely more diversified in its form, than that which is more simple. In this case, every ingredient is a source of variety; and, by being mingled in the composition in a greater or less degree, may give an original cast to the whole.

To explain the particular causes which vary the direction of the fancy in different men, would,

perhaps, be no easy task. We are led, it may be at first through accident, to the survey of one class of objects; this calls up a particular train of thinking, which we afterwards freely indulge; it easily finds access to the mind upon all occasions; the slightest actions serve to suggest it. It is nursed by habit, and reared up with attention, till it gradually swells to a torrent, which bears away every obstacle, and awakens in the mind the consciousness of peculiar powers. Such sensations eagerly impel to a particular purpose, and are sufficient to give to composition a distinct and determinate character.

Poetical genius is likewise much under the influence of the passions. The pleased and the splenetic, the serious and the gay, survey nature with very different eyes. That elevation of fancy which, with a melancholy turn, will produce scenes of gloomy grandeur and awful solemnity, will lead another, of a cheerful complexion, to delight, by presenting images of splendour and gaiety, and by inspiring gladness and joy. To these, and other similar causes, may be traced that boundless variety which diversifies the works of imagination, and which is so great, that I have thought the perusal of fine authors is like traversing the different regions of the earth. Some glow with a pleasant and refreshing warmth, whilst others kindle with a fierce and fiery heat: in one we meet with scenes of elegance and art, all is correct and regular, and a thousand beautiful objects spread

their colours to the eye, and regale the senses; in another, we behold nature in an unadorned majestic simplicity, scouring the plain with the tempest, sitting upon a rock, or walking upon the wings of the wind. Here we meet with a Sterne, who fans us with the softest delicacies; and there with a Rousseau, who hurries us along in whirlwind and tempest. Hence that delightful succession of emotions which are felt in the bosom of sensibility. We feel the empire of genius, we imbibe the impression, and the mind resembles an enchanted mansion, which, at the touch of some superior hand, at one time brightens into beauty, and at another darkens into horror. Even where the talents of men approach most nearly, an attentive eye will ever remark some small shades of difference, sufficient to distinguish them. Perhaps few authors have been distinguished by more similar features of character than Homer and Milton. That vastness of thought which fills the imagination, and that sensibility of spirit which renders every circumstance interesting, are the qualities of both: but Milton is the most sublime, and Homer the most picturesque. Homer lived in an early age, before knowledge was much advanced; he would derive little from any acquired abilities, and therefore may be styled the poet of nature. To this source, perhaps, we may trace the principal difference betwixt Homer and Milton. The Grecian poet was left to the movements of his own mind, and to the full influence of that variety of

passions which are common to all: his conceptions are therefore distinguished by their simplicity and force. In Milton, who was skilled in almost every department of science, learning seems sometimes to have shaded the splendour of genius.

No epic poet excites emotions so fervid as Homer, or possesses so much fire; but in point of sublimity he cannot be compared to Milton. I rather think the Greek poet has been thought to excel in this quality more than he really does, for want of a proper conception of its effects. When the perusal of an author raises us above our usual tone of mind, we immediately ascribe those sensations to the sublime, without considering whether they light on the imagination or the feelings; whether they elevate the fancy, or only fire the passions.

The sublime has for its object the imagination only, and its influence is not so much to occasion any fervour of feeling, as the calmness of fixed astonishment. If we consider the sublime as thus distinguished from every other quality, Milton will appear to possess it in an unrivalled degree; and here indeed lies the secret of his power. The perusal of Homer inspires us with an ardent sensibility; Milton with the stillness of surprise. The one fills and delights the mind with the confluence of various emotions; the other amazes with the vastness of his ideas. The movements of Milton's mind are steady and progressive: he carries the fancy through successive stages of elevation, and gradually increases the heat by adding fuel to the fire.

The flights of Homer are more sudden and transitory. Milton, whose mind was enlightened by science, appears the most comprehensive; he shews more acuteness in his reflections, and more sublimity of thought. Homer, who lived more with men, and had perhaps a deeper tincture of the human passions, is by far the most vehement and picturesque. To the view of Milton, the wide scenes of the universe seem to have been thrown open, which he regards with a cool and comprehensive survey, little agitated, and superior to those emotions which affect inferior mortals. Homer, when he rises the highest, goes not beyond the bounds of human nature; he still connects his descriptions with human passions, and, though his ideas have less sublimity, they have more fire. The appetite for greatness—that appetite which always grasps at more than it can contain, is never so fully satisfied as in the perusal of "Paradise Lost." In following Milton, we grow familiar with new worlds, we traverse the immensities of space, wandering in amazement, and finding no bounds. Homer confines the mind to a narrower circle, but that circle he brings nearer to the eye; he fills it with a quicker succession of objects, and makes it the scene of more interesting action.

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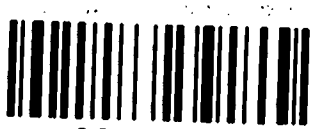
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